JÜRGEN KLOPP • RAY CLEMENCE • ANDY ROBBO • NAT PHILLIPS • RAFA • THE END OF THE STORM

LIVERPOOL FC









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MATIP ATTACKS – BACK OF THE NET

Joel Matip has that priceless ability as a centre-half to chip in with a goal on occasion. Here he is powering a header past Rui Patricio at the Kop-end to puts the Reds three-up against Wolves at Anfield and effectively make the game safe. It was the sixth time the likeable German defender found the net for Liverpool in all competitions since arriving in the summer of 2016, and it came from a lovely lofted cross from Mo Salah 67 minutes into proceedings.



TWO THOUSAND REASONS TO SMILE

There was a rendition of *You'll Never Walk Alone* with a difference before the Premier League game against Wolves, and this is what manager Jürgen Klopp had to say after an evening which saw a couple of thousand ballot-winning fans back at Anfield… "When we came out we all had goosebumps, it was incredible. When the people saw the first player then they obviously got quite noisy. The rest [of our players] who were still inside thought: oh my God, that sounds really loud. Then you come outside and see not the real face but the group of people. It was very emotional, to be honest, after ten months without that. It's just a wonderful, wonderful sign."



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YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE

NOBODY'S **PERFECT**

What score would you give the manager out of 100? Thought so. But, argues Jürgen Klopp, there is always – always – room for improvement



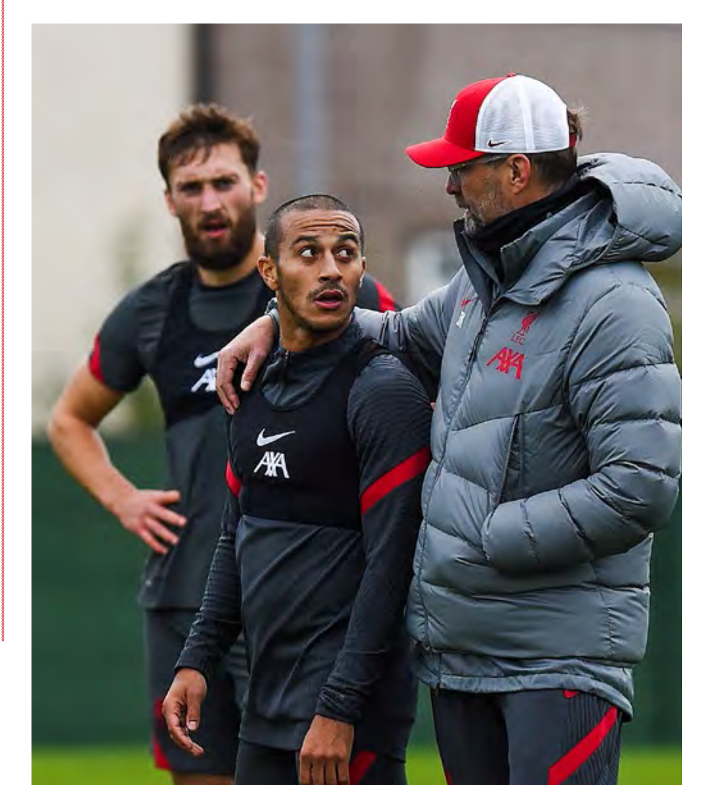

L.F.C.
L.F.C.
JK

Interview: UEFA.com

WE WANT TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT PERFECTION. WHAT DOES THE WORD MEAN TO YOU, BOTH IN LIFE AND IN SPORT, AND HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE IT?
Oh my God. That's what we have the ten minutes for, probably, to answer that question!

So. As a human, as a person, probably the first thing I realised that helped me a lot in life is that I don't have to go for perfection because it's not possible. I didn't even try, I just always tried to make the best of the things I had, and it never led anywhere close to perfection, to be honest. With football, it's pretty much the same.

So we are always trying to be as good as possible. But perfection, I never saw it, and I watch a lot of football as you can imagine, and I never saw a perfect game. I saw perfect goals, perfect skills in a moment, but not a perfect game. But it's nice to try to go for it, because it keeps you going.



As long as you are not perfect, you have space to improve, which is nice and gives you the drive to get through all the different challenges you face during a football season, a football career, or life.

So I'm not a specialist in perfection, obviously. Probably the opposite, but I still try to push my boys to get there as close as possible.

BUT IF WE LOOK AT LIVERPOOL'S LEAGUE POSITIONS SINCE YOU TOOK OVER: EIGHTH, FOURTH, FOURTH, SECOND, AND FIRST. IT WAS A WORK-IN-PROGRESS AND NOW YOU'VE REACHED THE SUMMIT. HOW WOULD YOU COMPARE THE JOB OF MANAGING THE CLUB NOW TO WHEN YOU TOOK OVER?
It's obviously completely different because I know, now, everybody in the club, which was not the case when I came here. So you have an idea of what you want to do, but you have no real idea if you really can do it, because you have to know about all the people you work together with, and that's now.

My team is now my team, and not only the players. I mean the staff around as well. And I'm not the person who comes in and thinks: we have to change everything just because I'm here now.

In the beginning we didn't know a lot about each other, and obviously because of the history and tradition of English managers coming in and [having] a proper 'clean-out' in the training-ground, everybody was in doubt and thought I could sack them, because I think they were ninth or tenth in the table when I came here, and maybe the kitchen staff is responsible for that and that's why I'd clean out there as well. So they were not too sure what they can expect.

Now, we are completely different. We call ourselves a family and we are a family, and that's why I like the job today much more than I liked it when I came here.

WHEN THERE'S LESS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT, DOES THAT MEAN THE FRUIT IS HANGING HIGHER AND HIGHER?
What do you mean, 'less space for improvement'? I think there's a lot of space for improvement, maybe if you speak about the

DIOGO I LIKED, HONESTLY, FROM THE FIRST GAME I SAW HIM PLAYING FOR WOLVES... THE WAY HE PLAYED IN THE VERY INTENSE STYLE, THE ROLE HE HAD, THE DISCIPLINE HE SHOWED, PLUS THE CREATIVITY AND DESIRE...AND HIS SKILLS ARE PRETTY GOOD

position in the table, yeah, there's not so much space, but for all the rest, oh my God. There's so much space for improvement. That's what we're working on.

But while you try to improve, you should never forget what is good already and use that, and that's what we do as well. So, it's not an obvious thing to do every morning: 'We have to get better, we have to get better'. No, we know some things are that good that it would sometimes be enough just to bring them consistently on the pitch.

WELL, MOST PEOPLE WOULD'VE SAID YOUR ATTACKING OPTIONS WERE PRETTY PERFECT. WHAT MADE YOU CONVINCED THAT DIOGO JOTA WOULD COME IN AND DO THE JOB HE HAS?

Actually I thought from something really good you never can have enough. I'm not sure about our options before and stuff like this. It's not about that. I was completely happy with all the squads I've had since I've been here but in the moment when you can change things, you should try to consider at least a change which could show up as an improvement.

And Diogo I liked, honestly, from the first game I saw him playing for Wolves. That's how it is. He had no idea about that, obviously, but for me it was always clear that when he was kind of in reach, I would go for him because [he's had a] very, very interesting and exciting career so far.

What he did, where he's come from, the moves he made, bam bam bam. And then the way he played for Wolves in the very, very intense style, the role he played, I liked the discipline he showed, plus the creativity he showed, plus the desire he showed.

And his skills are pretty good anyway, so I got a lot of good signs before we signed him that it could work out.

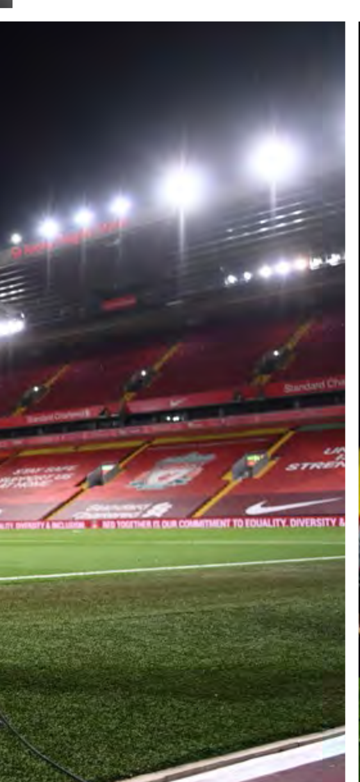
DO YOU HAVE TO BE QUITE CLINICAL IN THE TRANSFER-WINDOW BECAUSE YOU DIDN'T SIGN MANY?

We don't have a lot of space for failure, that's true. It's not




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THIS IS NOT A SEASON OR A TIME IN LIFE WHEN YOU SHOULD LIMIT YOURSELF WITH TARGETS, IT'S JUST CONCENTRATE ON THE NEXT GAME, PLAY IT, CONCENTRATE AGAIN





that we buy a player for 50-odd million and then if it doesn't work out, we buy another one for 50 million, not for the same position.

For sure, things can always happen, that it doesn't work out and being unlucky with injuries is always bad. Nobody is really responsible for that. But it just takes, then, much longer to work out. But no, true, we have to be properly clinical.

YOUR START TO THE UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE THIS YEAR WAS PERFECT, JUST THAT BLIP AGAINST ATALANTA BEFORE QUALIFICATION WAS SEALED…
Good!

EUROPEAN CHAMPIONS ARE ALWAYS REMEMBERED, BUT MULTIPLE CHAMPIONS HAVE A SPECIAL PLACE IN HISTORY. HOW DETERMINED ARE YOU TO HELP THE TEAM ACHIEVE THAT?
No, no, look. This is not a season, this is not a time in life when you should limit yourself, in a positive and a negative way, with targets. It's just we all have to get through this situation. That's how it is.

I think that's what we're all doing. Get through with [fewer] bruises, [fewer] knocks and stuff like this, or the lowest possible number, and then in the end if we get through the group stage, and we get through the last 16, eight, four, we will see what happens.

But it's not a target-directed season. I'm not sure if that's the right saying but the way you say: 'That's a target and if we don't reach it, we failed'. No, it's really just: 'Get through it'. Concentrate on the next game. Play it, and then either team will win it. Then concentrate on the next game, and that's how it works at the moment.



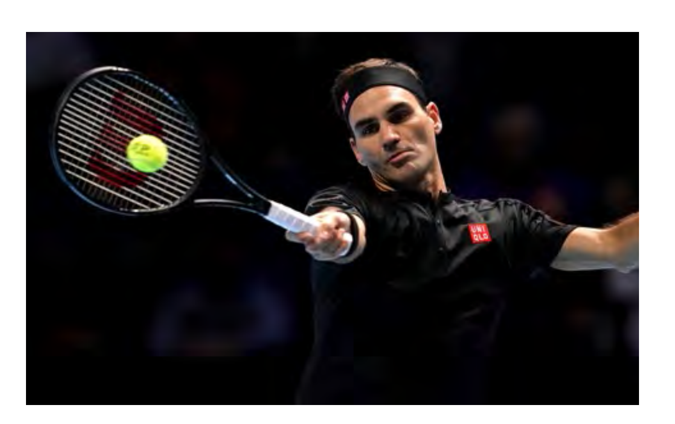
There's no moment where we think: oh, we probably can make it. I don't think there's any team in the world at the moment who can have the feeling that early anyway but also in general that 'We might be champions this year' in whichever competition, because nobody knows what happens.

For the players it's incredibly intense, what we are doing. We're all happy and it's without any alternative that we play. It's great, love it, fantastic, but it's all on the back of the players. They have to deliver. And honestly, you watch the game and you don't think about what they go through in the week, because we all have normal lives, obviously, left and right of the games we play.

And that's pretty much the same for all of us, where you cannot see friends, you cannot see your family, and all these things. And that's for…recovery, it's essential.

Recovery is not only sleep, it's not only treatment. It's really giving yourself a bit of freedom to think about things you want to think about and not what you have to think about. And that's obviously in the world out there at the moment, the biggest problem in that we don't have this time often enough and it keeps us quite tense.

That doesn't help if then you have every three days a game to play at 110 per cent, in the best way.



ROGER FEDERER VERY OFTEN LOOKS PERFECT… HE WOULD PROBABLY SAY NOT EVEN CLOSE, BUT I'VE SEEN GAMES OF HIS WHERE I THOUGHT YOU JUST CAN'T PLAY ANY BETTER



HOW DO YOU BECOME RELENTLESS OR ADAPT TO BEING RELENTLESS? ALSO, ONCE YOU'VE REACHED THE TARGET THAT WAS THE FOCUS, WHETHER THAT WAS CHAMPIONS OF EUROPE OR CHAMPIONS OF THE PREMIER LEAGUE…
Or of the world [laughs]. Sorry to mention it – it didn't happen that often in my life, so...

HOW DIFFICULT IS IT TO CHANGE THAT AND SAY OKAY, THE JOB'S DONE, FRESH TARGET, NEW SEASON, START AGAIN?
I don't know. I really don't know how it works. It's like you play a tennis game, you win it, and there's a next one. That's clear, that's the next game. You win it and it's the biggest thing in the world and it's the first time you've smashed Roger Federer, which will probably never happen. It will probably never happen, even when he's 56 or something.

But then there's the next one and you play it with all you have. And then there's a next one and you play it with all you have because you have no other chance to win this game. I think sports teach you that. It's clear, you win a game, great! Be happy, celebrate, perfect. But there's a next game.

So, what do you want to do with that? You go into the game and tell the other team: "By the way we won last week – what do you think about that?" They are not interested in it. They want to beat you with all you have. So, it's a completely natural process, for me, to stay greedy in sports. Not life but sports, 100 per cent.

That's because it's part of the game. You want to win. You play this game only for winning. We have fun, we love it, we really like what we do. But you could meet at a park with [smaller] challenges, honestly, and it's a nice game to play there, but we play against the best players in the world, so you want to win it.

LAST QUESTION: WHICH ATHLETE OR TEAM IN HISTORY DO YOU FEEL GOT CLOSE TO PERFECTION OR WERE PERFECT?
It's really interesting that I mentioned him a second ago, without knowing that the next question would be about that. But for me, very often, Roger Federer looks like…perfect. He will say, "Not even close", and yes, he lost games and stuff like this. But I saw games of him where I thought: I don't think you can play better.

But I'm not a specialist, obviously. I like tennis but other people know much more about it. There were moments when I thought: that's perfect. And it didn't happen a lot in other moments. So, yes, Roger.

inside HQ

The state-of-the-art AXA Training Centre ticks all the boxes for Liverpool's players, coaches and training staff





Tuesday 17 November 2020 was the date when Liverpool Football Club celebrated the opening of its new AXA Training Centre, 722 days since construction began, with the occasion commemorated by the installation of a steel time-capsule…to be re-opened in the year 2070.

Marking a new chapter in the club's history, the complex was designed by architects KSS, with input from key Liverpool FC personnel, and it was brought to fruition by civil engineering contractors McLaughlin & Harvey.

The AXA Training Centre comprises 9,200 square metres and for the first time creates a combined first-team and U23 Academy facility, each of which has their own identity. It boasts three full-size pitches, made to mirror Anfield's hallowed turf as closely as possible, complete with under-soil heating and floodlighting.

The design of the main building provides a clean, modern and warm environment with lots of natural daylight and simple but crisp detailing which celebrates the club's history.

There are goalkeeping and warm-up areas, and indoor facilities fit for Premier League champions including two gyms, a full-size sports hall, pool, hydrotherapy complex and specialist sports rehabilitation suites. There are also dedicated TV studios, press-conference facilities and office accommodation.

Club managing director Andy Hughes reflected: "We started this project over two years ago, marking a significant milestone in the history of this great football club. After saying a fond farewell to Melwood we are excited to be starting a new era.

"There have been so many people involved in making this great project happen – it is impossible to thank them all as individuals. Our first-team manager Jürgen Klopp, sporting director Michael Edwards and Academy director Alex Inglethorpe have been instrumental in turning plans into a reality.

"We must also thank Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council and local residents for their continued support throughout the delivery of this extended project."

Reds boss Klopp called it "a really special day for the team – it has been a long time coming. There have been a lot of steps, meetings with architects, designers, everybody!

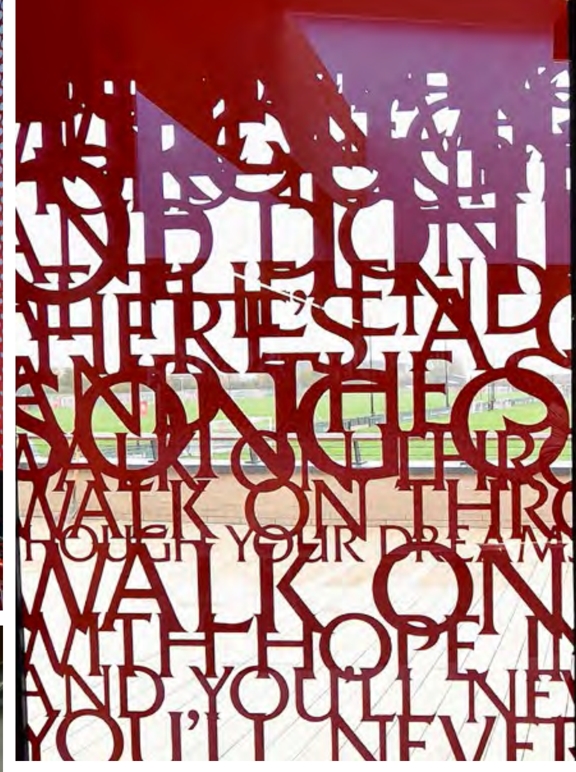
"The facility is great and whoever has the chance to visit will be impressed. It is a wonderful building, you have everything you need now and for the future. It's pretty much perfect!"

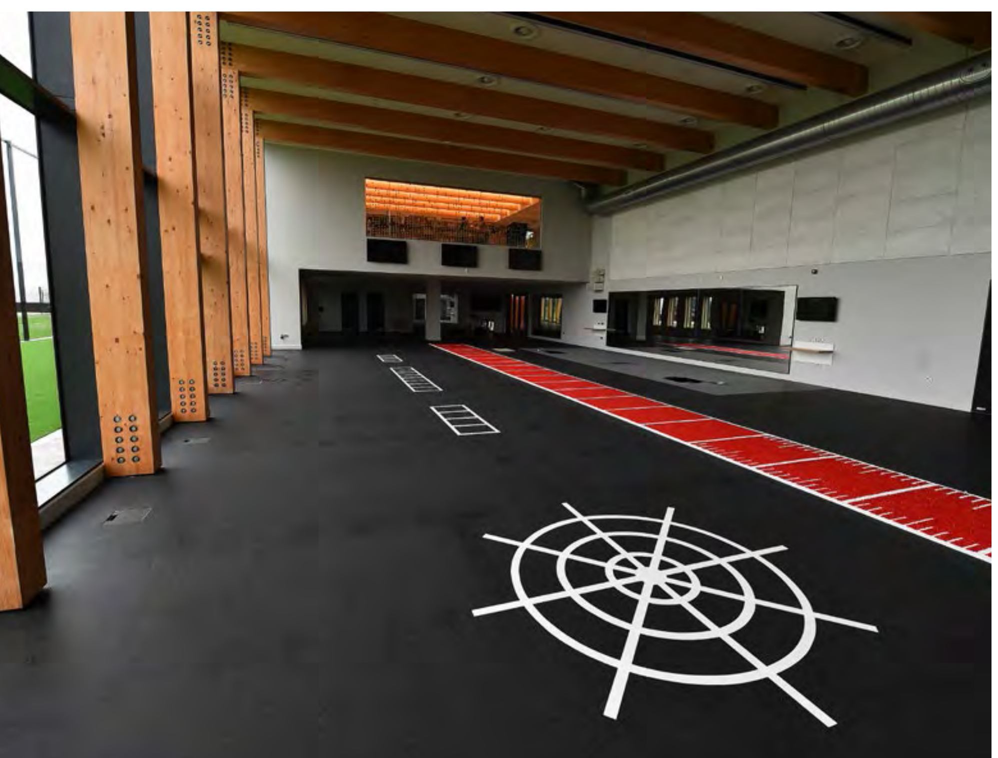
Knowsley councillor Tony Brennan expressed delight that "in addition to these remarkable new facilities, the football club has also invested – with us – to improve the sporting facilities which are available to our local community.

"The upgraded community pitches and new pavilion are already




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MADE FOR ME
& I WAS MADE
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being extensively used and not just by youth teams but also veterans and ladies too – something we really want to build upon.

"For local people, football is simply part of their DNA. Knowsley is the birthplace of three European Cup-winning captains [Steven Gerrard and Phil Thompson for the Reds and Dennis Mortimer for Aston Villa]. So having Liverpool Football Club training here in Kirkby is a huge thing for local people.

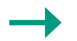
"We wish the club every success in these fantastic new surroundings."

The AXA Training Centre has a decidedly eco-friendly aspect, too. Approximately 2.5 tonnes of grass seed was sewn ahead of the opening, with each pitch composed of 97 per cent natural grass and three per cent artificial fibres.

To support healthy growth the pitches contain 180 tonnes of Zeolite, a form of volcanic ash and other organic products, which reduces nutrient loss and helps keep the pitches to an exceptionally high standard.

Sixty pop-up irrigation heads have been installed to provide water to all the pitches to give the slick, fast surface required for Liverpool's style of play.

A borehole extracts groundwater to irrigate the pitches and tend to the landscaping on-site, ensuring that the club's irrigation strategy is













self-sufficient and avoids the use of mains-sourced water for irrigation.

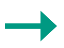
As part of the maintenance building, a biological vehicle wash system allows the grounds team to wash equipment, vehicles or parts and reclaim the water used. The system treats and filters out grease, grime, oil and grass cuttings that can collect on vehicles and equipment and effectively recycles the dirty water to be used again.

Impressive stuff – it had to be if the transition to Kirkby from Melwood, home of so many memories, was going to be smooth. First-team captain Jordan Henderson admitted as much in his matchday programme notes ahead of the move.

"I have to say our new home, the AXA Training Centre, is superb," he wrote. "We are very grateful, as a team, that so much has been invested into this place so we can have some of the best facilities the game can offer.

"Unfortunately, because of the ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, we haven't been able to meet and thank in person the people responsible for planning and building it.

"To these guys we can promise we'll show the facility the respect it





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LIVERPOOL
PADELTECH



2000s
1990s
2001
JOHN ARNE RIISE
2000
GARY McALLISTER
1999
DIETMAR HAMANN
1999
STEPHANE HENCHOZ
1999
SAMI HYYPIÄ
1991
ROB JONES
1991
MARK WRIGHT
1987
PETER BEARDSLEY
1987
RAY HOUGHTON









AXA TRAINING CENTRE
AXA
Training Centre



AXA
Training Centre





deserves to reflect the commitment that went into delivering it.

The skipper went on: "When going to work at Melwood you knew you had to perform your role, be it player or staff member, to the highest level possible, because of the standards set before.

"We have a unique opportunity to be the people who set the standards here – and it's a challenge we will all embrace."

A video message from Jordan appears on a USB stick in the historic time-capsule, along with others from Jürgen Klopp, Alex Inglethorpe, Michael Edwards, Women's manager Vicky Jepson plus Reds legends Sir Kenny Dalglish, Ian Rush and John Aldridge.

Time capsules have traditionally been used as a means of communicating with future generations, their items providing an insight into the era, and it's proposed that this one will be opened in 50 years' time.

Club museum curator Stephen Done says: "It contains a wide range of content in an attempt to capture a snapshot of where Liverpool FC has arrived since it first acquired the Melwood training grounds in 1950."

Fan memorabilia figures prominently, including a pair of pin-badges from supporters union Spirit of Shankly and a set of stickers and silk scarf from Spion Kop 1906.

Among the community-themed objects are a 'thumbprint tree' created with local schools in the Kirkby area, and a print of the 'We are Liverpool, You Are Our Champions' murals in Anfield and Kirkby.

Also inside the capsule: a letter from club owners Fenway Sports Group; a pair of Jürgen Klopp's glasses, signed boots from Virgil van Dijk and signed goalkeeping gloves from Alisson Becker; a 2020/21 season Nike home shirt and AXA training shirt; the Liverpool v Chelsea matchday programme from 22 July 2020 when the Reds were crowned Premier League Champions; a 2019 UEFA Champions League final shirt signed by the Reds squad; a tribute to those who lost their lives at Hillsborough; and a mini feature-film on Melwood's history.

AXA chief of communications, brand and corporate responsibility, Ulrike Decoene, expressed his company's pride in the Training Centre and hoped the time-capsule "will convey to future generations the common vision and values this partnership was built upon."


PRO
sand






1978-81 /
EXIT B
FIRMINO
9



2017-20

Bob's unbeatables, Klopp's kings. Two record unbeaten league runs at Anfield, two totally different eras – so how do the stats match up?





DAYS IN 63-GAME RUN
1978-81: 1,071
2017-20: 1,273

SEASON SPREAD
1977/78 (8 games); **1978/79** (21); **1979/80** (21); **1980/81** (13)
2016/17 (2); **2017/18** (19); **2018/19** (19); **2019/20** (19); **2020/21** (4).

GOALS
1978-81: 142
2017-20: 166

MOST APPEARANCES
1978-81: Phil Neal 63
2017-20: Mo Salah 60

WON & DRAWN
1978-81: 49 wins; 14 draws
2017-20: 52 wins; 11 draws

PERCENTAGE OF WINS
1978-81: 78
2017-20: 83

PLAYERS USED

1978-81: ***20***
Neal (63 apps); Dalglish, Clemence, Souness (all 62); R Kennedy (61); McDermott (57); Thompson (56); Hansen (50); Case (48); Johnson (43); A Kennedy (42); Hughes (17); Heighway (14); Lee (13); Fairclough, Irwin (both 9); Smith, Cohen (both 6); Money (2); Ogrizovic (1).

2017-20: ***40***
Salah (60 apps); Firmino (59); Wijnaldum (58); Mane (55); Robertson (55); Alexander-Arnold (49); Van Dijk (47); Milner (45); Henderson (44); Alisson, Gomez (both 37); Oxlade-Chamberlain (33); Fabinho (31); Matip (29); Lovren (26); Lallana (23); Keita (22); Origi (20); Shaqiri (16); Sturridge, Can (both 15); Klavan (12); Karius (11); Coutinho, Mignolet, Solanke (all 10); Moreno (9); Adrian (7); Clyne (6); Minamino, Jones (both 5); Ings (4); Jota, N Williams (both 3); Leiva, Grujic, Elliott (all 2); Woodburn, Camacho, Phillips (all 1).

CLEAN-SHEETS

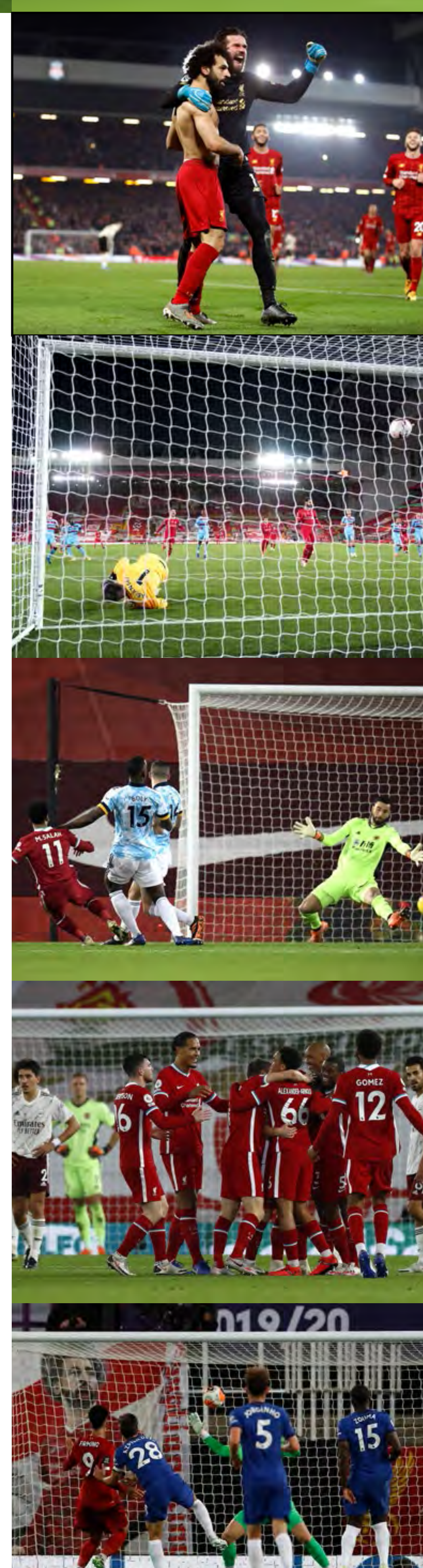
1978-81: ***41***
Clemence (40); Ogrizovic (1)

2017-20: ***33***
Alisson (19); Mignolet, Karius (both 7)

POINTS (USING 3 FOR A WIN)
1978-81: 161
2017-20: 167

MOST REGULAR SCORE
1978-81: 2-0 (10 times)
2017-20: 2-0 and 2-1 (both 8 times)





GOALSCORERS

1978-81: ***15***

Dalglish (31); Johnson (24); McDermott (22); R Kennedy (15); Souness (10); Fairclough (8); Case (7); Neal (6); own-goals (5); A Kennedy, Hansen (both 4); Smith (2); Lee, Heighway, Irwin, Cohen (all 1).

2017-20: ***23***

Salah (51); Mane (36); Firmino (16); Van Dijk (7); Shaqiri, Wijnaldum (both 6); Origi (5); Oxlade-Chamberlain (4); Fabinho, Sturridge, Coutinho, Alexander-Arnold (all 3); Matip, Keita, Lovren, Henderson, Robertson, Jota, own-goals (all 2); Lallana, Can, Solanke, Milner, Jones (all 1).

BIGGEST WIN

1978-81: Liverpool 7 Tottenham Hotspur 0 (2 Sept 1978).

2017-20: Liverpool 5 Huddersfield Town 0 (26 April 2019);
Liverpool 5 Watford 0 (27 Feb 2019);
Liverpool 5 Swansea City 0 (26 Dec 2017);
Liverpool 5 Watford 0 17 March 2018).

MOST SUCCESSIVE VICTORIES

1978-81: 7
2017-20: 24

BEST UNBEATEN RUN IN ALL COMPS

1978-81: 85 matches
2017-20: 56 matches

GAME 64 V LEICESTER CITY

1978-81: Liverpool 1 Leicester City 2 (31 Jan 1981).
2017-20: Liverpool 3 Leicester City 0 (22 Nov 2020).



CLEMENCE IS OUR GOALIE

The best there is around… That was the line from the Kop song, and this is a gallery in tribute to one of Liverpool FC's true legends

Tommy Smith didn't give out many hugs, but Clem got one after making a save against Leeds in December 1970, the year he became Liverpool's no1

Double-winners Arsenal opted to go on tour in August 1971 so FA Cup runners-up Liverpool played Second Division champions Leicester City in the Charity Shield at Filbert Street. As you do. The Foxes won 1-0, but Ray Clemence was in fine form. Manager Bill Shankly experimented with a new higher defensive line that left Clemence facing four one-v-one situations, including this against John Farrington. Ray didn't concede from any of them, but would have to wait another couple of years for a first winners' medal.



Anxious faces on the Kop, but Clemence had Jimmy Pearce's curling shot covered. This clean-sheet against Spurs at Anfield in December 1971 was one of a club-record 323 that Ray kept in 665 appearances for Liverpool.

Wolves forward Derek Dougan takes another Clemence save on the chin at Anfield in 1973

The UEFA Cup was in safe hands in 1973. Ray saved a penalty as the Reds beat Borussia Moenchengladbach 3-0 at Anfield in the final's first leg then completed an aggregate win in Germany.

Brave and agile, Clem denies Arsenal at Wembley in the 1971 FA Cup final and at Highbury (below) in 1972

Keeping the Hammers out at Upton Park in 1975

Playing outfield during Tommy Smith's testimonial at Anfield in May 1977



The faces behind the goal at White Hart Lane say it all as Clemence denies Spurs sub John Pratt during Liverpool's 1-0 FA Cup sixth-round win in 1980, the game when Terry McDermott scored THAT volley

He won it five times - Ray celebrates his fifth league championship in 1980

Clem's classic green jersey had a sponsor at his 1980 Anfield testimonial against Anderlecht



Paris 1981. The night when Ray won his third European Cup with LFC but also decided it was time to move on. "I sat with a paper cup full of champagne and the feeling that it was just another game. I thought: if you can't be on the ceiling after winning the European Cup, it's not the place to be. I made the decision there and then."

Kopites weren't the only ones to give Ray a warm welcome back to Anfield on his return with Spurs in 1982 – Phil Thompson was made-up to see him



In March 1985, keeping a clean-sheet against the Reds as Spurs won their first game at Anfield since 1912, the year the Titanic went down!



Donning the gloves again, Clem came out of retirement to play in Ray Kennedy's testimonial against Arsenal at Highbury in April 1991



Back at Anfield in 2014, Ray often returned to see the Reds and in 2017 joined the LFC Stadium Tour team

On 15 November 2020, at the age of 72, Ray Clemence MBE passed away following a 15-year battle against prostate cancer. Fans group Spion Kop 1906 paid tribute to him at the behind-closed-doors game against Leicester City at Anfield. The Reds won 3-0.

A rose-red reef, replica Clemence green jersey worn by Alisson, and Leicester goalkeeper Kasper Schmeichel's gloves were placed behind the Kop goal that Ray used to guard at the Leicester match

Gone but not forgotten – Ray's family visit the mural dedicated to him on the side of a house on Wylva Road, Anfield. He remains Liverpool's greatest-ever goalkeeper, 'the best there is around'. RIP Clem



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ANDY'S CHRISTMAS COUNTDOWN

The Reds full-back has launched an advent calendar with a difference – with under-privileged youngsters back home the beneficiaries

When he's not marauding down the left flank for Liverpool, Andy Robertson has been putting much of those incredible reserves of energy into his new charity. The Reds no26 launched the AR26 Charity on 29 November – appropriately 26 days before Christmas!

The charity aims to help disadvantaged children throughout Scotland through three different streams: 'Football For All', 'Hope For Youths' and 'Life Changing Experiences'.

At a launch event held on Facebook Live and hosted by Scottish journalist Emma Dodds, he explained that the charity has been a long time in the planning but publishing a book about his Liverpool story proved to be the catalyst.

"I think the publishers won't mind me saying that when they first came to me, I knocked it back pretty much straightaway. I'm still quite young and everything that goes along with that, so I felt it was too early. But then when I heard what they wanted the storyline to be, I thought again.

"The charity was at its very, very early stages at the time and I thought that would be a great way to start it with the funds from the book going towards getting things up and running and hopefully we'd be able to help many kids.

"Once I weighed all that up with my partner Rachel and everyone else involved in AR26, I thought for the sake of me writing a diary for a year that's been incredibly successful, then why not? We thought: let's go for it because the money we raise will be well worth it and it's proving that way.

"Once I got going with the book, *Now You're Gonna Believe Us*, it was fine. I think after the first chapter I was maybe feeling a wee bit, should I be doing this or should I not? But by the end I was loving it. I enjoyed involving the people who helped me with it. I hope a lot of people enjoyed reading it because I certainly enjoyed doing it."

Andy says the inspiration for the charity came from several sources. "Rachel and I had always looked at it as something that we wanted to do and it's taken us a couple of years to get to a position where we are ready to launch it.

"The aim is to help underprivileged kids in Scotland and to try and help level the playing field a wee bit.

"Me and Rachel have got two amazing young kids and I think when you become a parent your whole thought-process changes. You worry about them every single day and you want the best for them and I know every parent is the same.

"So you start thinking about how you can help parents who

Words: William Hughes





aren't as fortunate as we are and as fortunate as our kids will be."

The Scotland skipper admits that he has struggled with accepting the power the voice of a prominent footballer can hold. "I think at the start of my career I was probably a bit guilty, even when I first went to Liverpool, in terms of not knowing or accepting that my voice carries maybe a wee bit louder than somebody else's.

"I try to live as normal a life as possible in abnormal circumstances with being on the telly all the time with cameras in your face and things like that. But I then had to accept it: okay, if I say something and somebody else says something then my voice may carry that bit further. But if I can use that voice for the greater good then that's fantastic.

"I hope to help thousands of kids but if I only help one then I'll believe that the AR26 Charity has been well worth it. We have so many plans in place and we hope to help a lot more children. I hope to use my voice and my vision along with everybody else connected with the charity to try and make a big difference in Scotland.

"I do believe the gap is getting bigger and if anybody can help to close that, then so be it. I'm not going to do it on my own and I'm not expecting to, but if I can make a bit of a difference and people become more aware of it and try to help as well, then I believe that we can certainly make a big difference in our country."

The charity has identified three main areas for its work. Andy continues: "There is 'Football For All' which will provide free football coaching up and down the country which will be massive.

"Then there is 'Hope For Youths' which is trying to get teenagers and young adults more life-experiences, whether that's going out to work or getting further education.

"It's for people who maybe haven't had the best upbringing or have been brought into difficult circumstances and to show them that they don't need to follow in the footsteps of others. They can break away and can go and be successful in their own life.

"Finally there is 'Life Changing Experiences' for sick children. I know how much of a positive impact we can have on kids when we do our hospital visits with Liverpool. You see the smiles on their faces and it's priceless.

"I want to create more of that because I think if we can do good in a really tough time for these people and their families then it's all worth it."

One of the charity's launch initiatives was a special advent calendar with opportunities being given away in each window. The first door provided two families with a week's holiday in the new year at Calum's Cabin, a respite centre on the Isle of Bute.

Caroline Speirs, co-founder of Calum's Cabin, said: "We were just absolutely delighted to be the recipient of the AR26's first day of the advent calendar. It means so much to us.

"The money which is going to be donated is £1500 and will make such a difference. It will help two families come and spend a week here in the new year with their child who is suffering from cancer or a cancer-related disease. This will allow them to spend quality family time together, recharge their batteries for what may lie ahead and have memories that will last them a lifetime."

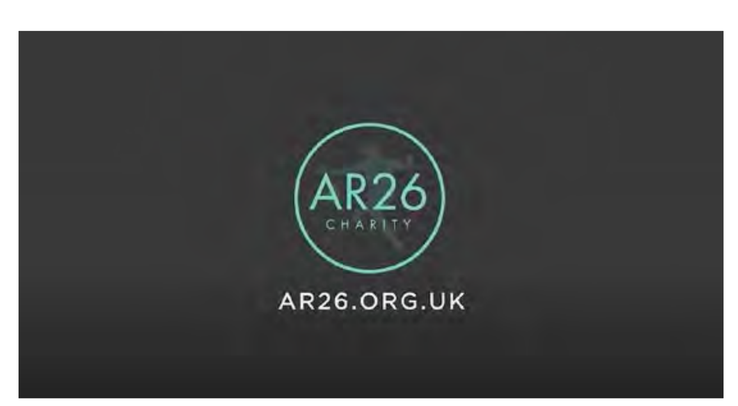
Andy adds: "My kids will wake up on Christmas Day to presents from Santa and presents from family, but we know that some families are not as lucky as that and that's why Christmas presents have been at the forefront of a couple of the doors on our advent calendar.

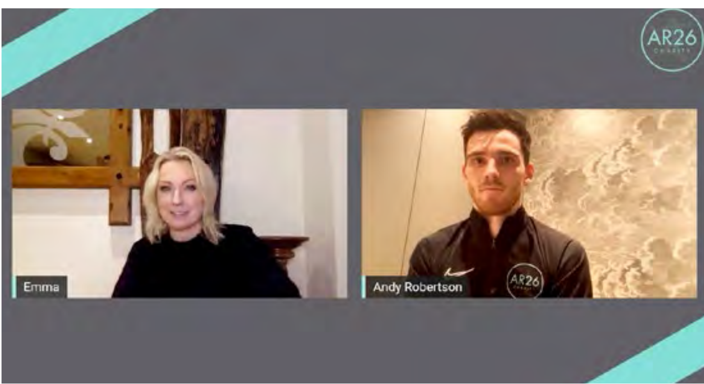
"It's exciting to be able to help and hopefully we can do that for many years. That's certainly our drive and goal for this charity."

• Find out more about the work of the AR26 Charity by visiting www.ar26.org.uk











"I HOPE TO HELP THOUSANDS OF KIDS BUT IF I ONLY HELP ONE THEN I'LL BELIEVE THAT THE AR26 CHARITY HAS BEEN WELL WORTH IT"

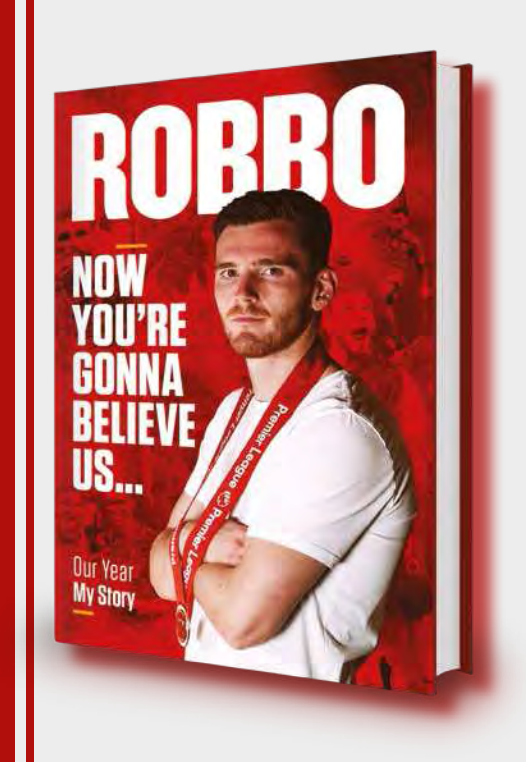
A GIFT THAT KEEPS GIVING

Proceeds from sales of Andy's book *Robbo: Now You're Gonna Believe Us* help to support the work of AR26.

It's the compelling inside-account of Liverpool's recent success as seen through the eyes of the charismatic defender who's built up a cult following among the club's worldwide fanbase.

Robertson lifts the lid for the first time on a remarkable period in Anfield history. From the heartbreak of Champions League final defeat to Real Madrid in 2018 through to that first top-fight league title in 30 years, and taking in the unprecedented drama of the pandemic lockdown, this is a story that will fascinate and inspire fans.

It's available via reachsportshop.com and the online LFC store as well as club stores and all major bookshops.





Kelleher's big stage

Without the contribution of the younger players this season, says Jürgen Klopp, he would have been "lost." Goalkeeper Caoimhin Kelleher, adds the boss, "has had the chance to show his talent on the big stage and he's used that opportunity." Captain Jordan Henderson adds: "We are so fortunate to have a brilliant set of keepers, all of whom are entirely focused on delivering what's best for the team."

SIDE BY SIDE

We need to act now to make sure every child has a chance to thrive, a chance to create a better future for themselves.

Jürgen Klopp, LFC Foundation Ambassador

We invite Reds fans around the world to stand with us.
Together we can help children rise above adversity
and empower them to learn, lead and succeed.

Side by Side we can do anything.

Join us:

liverpoolfc.com/sidebyside

LFC Foundation is an independent charity registered in England & Wales with The Charity Commission, Charity Number: 1096572.
Right To Play UK is an independent charity registered in England & Wales with The Charity Commission, Charity Number: 88880 4218 RR0001.





OF THE **LIVERPOOL FC** MAGAZINE







issue 02



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issue 05

Eight years, give or take a few weeks, is a long old time in football. Only one member of the Liverpool FC first-team squad remains from August 2012, when the first issue of the club's new-look, official monthly magazine was published: the current captain, Jordan Henderson, who'd only recently turned 22 at the time.**

The launch issue back then had Steven Gerrard, Craig Bellamy and Luis Suarez on the front cover wearing the new home and away kits for season 2012/13, and there was a free CD-Rom (remember them) of the then skipper's best goals.

The magazine's debut coincided with the appointment of Brendan Rodgers as Reds manager and it felt like the start



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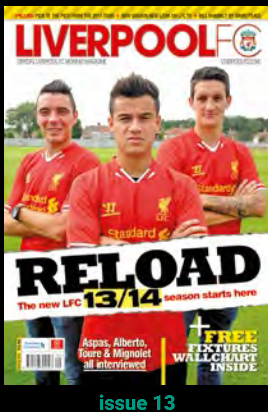
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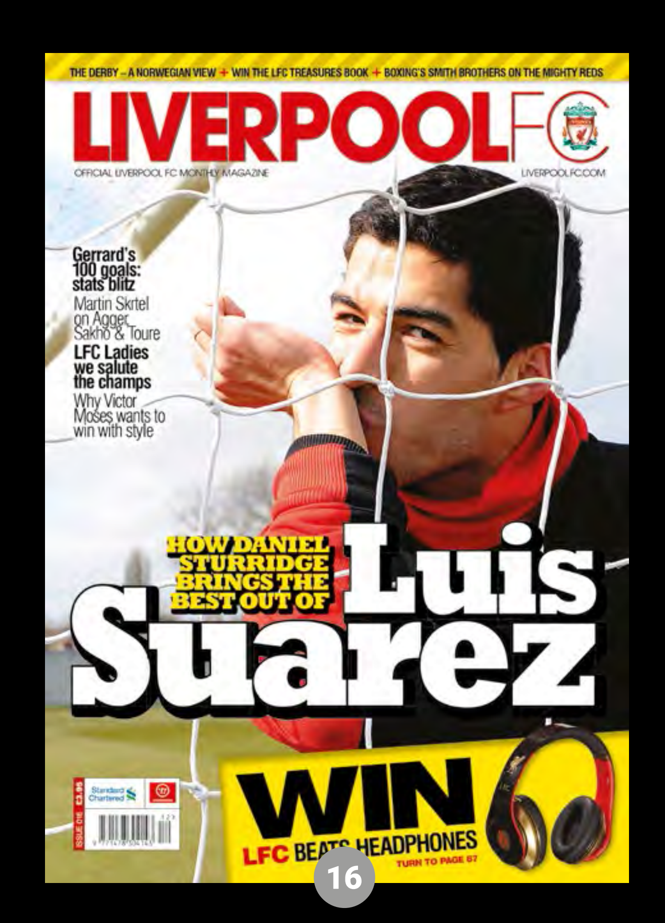
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of something special. We strolled along the sands of Crosby beach with Jamie Carragher, spoke to Lucas at home as he recovered from cruciate-ligament surgery, profiled new signing Fabio Borini and heard from actress Sue Johnston, then starring in *Coronation Street*, about her love for all things LFC.

Our office was in the same Chapel Street building as the club's own city-centre HQ. Admittedly it was a few floors lower, in fact a cell-like room with a view of the Pig & Whistle pub as opposed to the Royal Liver Building and River Mersey, but it was there that the editorial team bounced ideas and occasionally keyboards off each other as Brendan began to build an exciting side that would soon challenge for the Premier League title.





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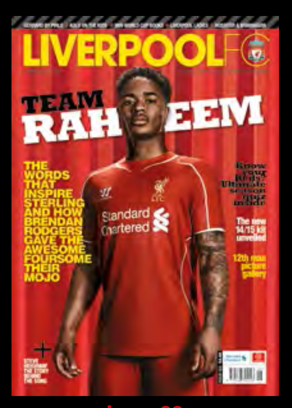
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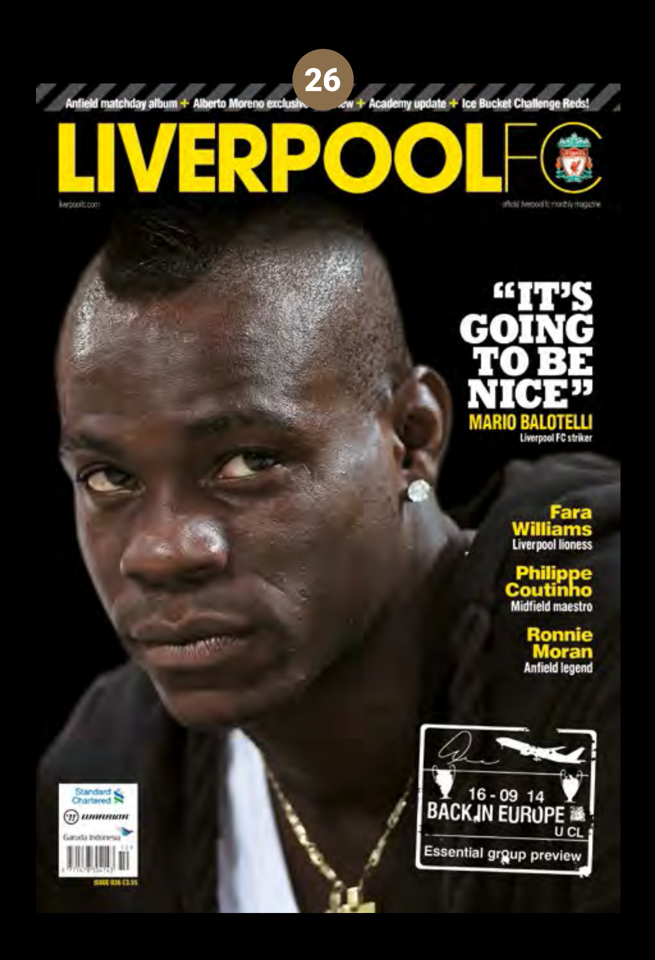
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As proud publishers of both the club's monthly magazine and the official LFC matchday programme, we were responsible for delivering high-quality publications which reflected the club's values and traditions and chimed with its broader strategies across different platforms. And of course, they had to be the very best 'read' for Liverpool fans everywhere.

As such, childish pursuits liking hiding under office desks to surprise colleagues ambling back from lunch, bickering over press passes and match tickets and serenading the neighbours with a 'fart soundboard' were largely frowned upon.

The early issues set a trend for featuring celebrity fans as well as star players. The magazine invited world snooker ace





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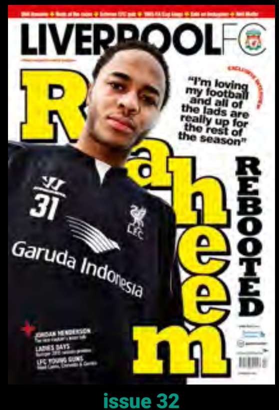
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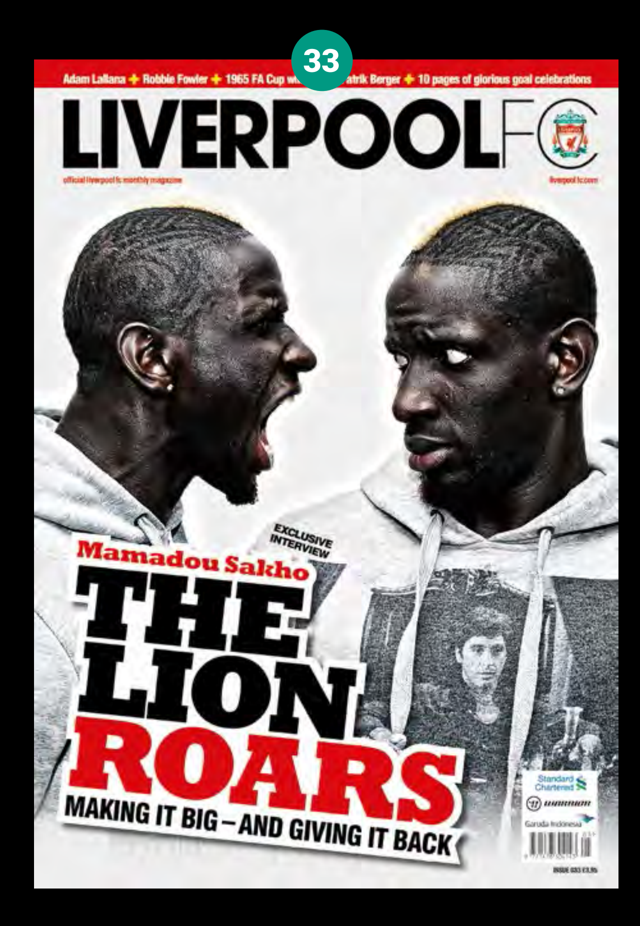
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and Liverpool supporter Ricky Walden to Melwood to shoot pool with Reds midfielder Jonjo Shelvey. Upcoming heptathlete Katarina Johnson-Thompson was our guest at a Europa League group game with Udinese at Anfield.

We caught up with TV star Alan Fletcher, best known for playing Dr Karl Kennedy in Australian soap *Neighbours*, about his passion for the Reds. Actor and Liverpool fanatic Ewen MacIntosh, aka Keith from *The Office*, dropped in for a chat and a scotch egg.

Back on the pitch, new signings Daniel Sturridge and Philippe Coutinho appeared on consecutive covers followed by full-back Glen Johnson, a late replacement for Luis Suarez who'd taken






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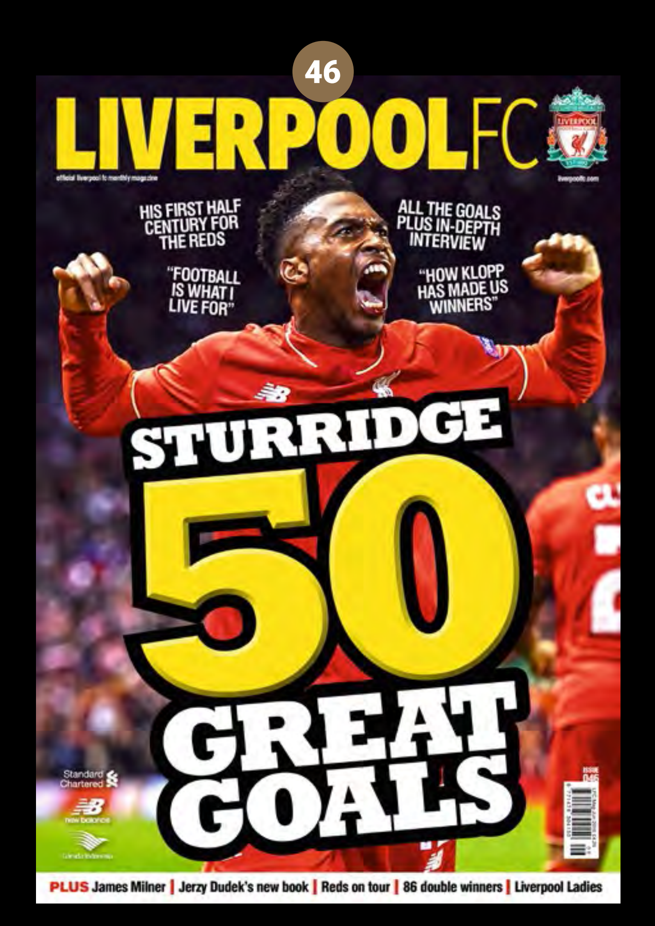
a shine to Chelsea defender Branislav Ivanovic's shoulder the preceding weekend in April 2013.

The magazine covered Jamie Carragher's retirement and Steven Gerrard's sign-off, the expanded Main Stand's progress under FSG's visionary stewardship, and two WSL titles on the spin for Liverpool Ladies (as they were first called).

By the start of season 2015/16 the monthly magazine and matchday programme had a new publisher, now known as Reach Sport, and we'd switched our operations to Old Hall Street in Liverpool city-centre, still within a raking Trent Alexander-Arnold pass of the club's own swish offices.

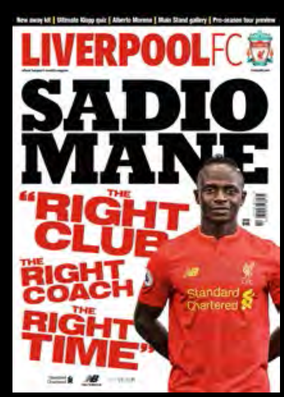
The move slightly preceded the arrival of Jürgen Klopp, with

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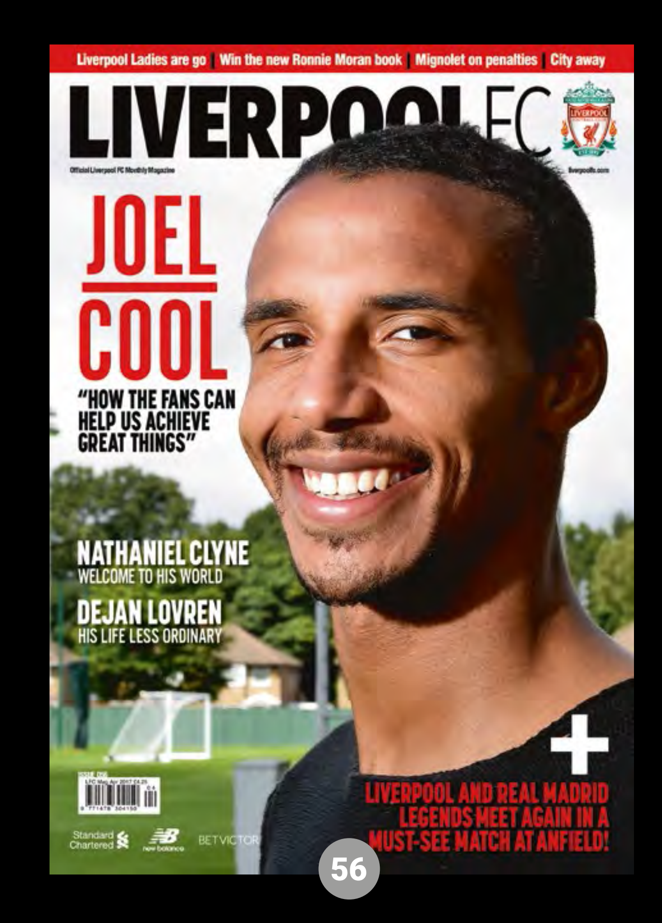
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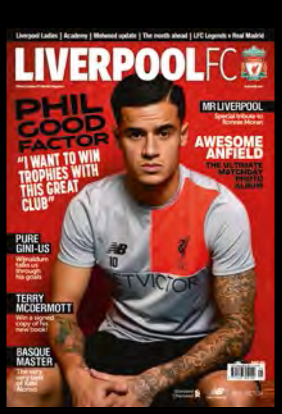


Issue 40 of the magazine there at White Hart Lane for his first game in charge in October 2015. A year later, the landmark 50th edition featured the boss on a special cover created by Reds fan and illustrator Dave Williams, also coinciding with the opening of the spectacular expanded Main Stand.

It was a great time to be a Liverpool fan and it felt like it was only going to get better. Ahead of season 2017/18 the magazine paid tribute to the late, great Ronnie Moran then prepared for another rollercoaster ride as the club's 125th anniversary celebrations kicked in.

A new signing made his debut on the cover: Mohamed Salah. "I'm very excited to be here, very happy," he said inside the 60th





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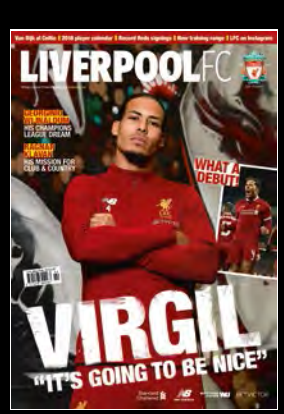


issue. "Everyone knows the club is very big – we have to win something for the fans." In our wildest dreams, could any of us have imagined exactly what was to follow?

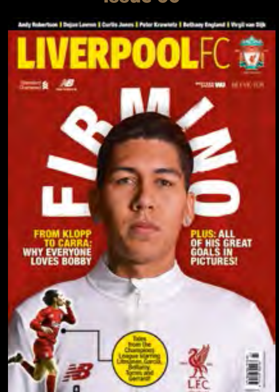
Another new arrival, Virgil van Dijk, was on the front for the start of 2018. His message for the supporters was prophetic if a tad understated: "It's going to be nice."

Then came Kiev. Issue 71, with new boy Fabinho on the cover, lamented the loss in the Champions League final but mused: "Would we go through the whole thing again, with the exact same outcome? In the blink of an eye.

"Another three years under Jürgen Klopp with no guarantee of trophies but more of the same pure joy? Oh go on then.



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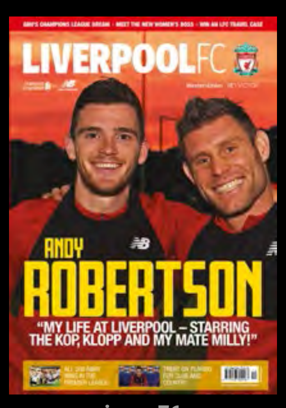
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"But listen, we're pretty certain there'll be silverware to show for it next time too."

Fast-forward to Issue 83 and jubilant skipper Jordan Henderson on the front, kissing 'Old Big Ears'. Seven months later, for Issue 90 in January 2020, it would be Roberto Firmino and Alisson parading the FIFA Club World Cup.

Around four years earlier (Issue 43) there'd been a special double-sided cover to mark the Reds reaching the final of the Capital One Cup. Levels.

So to the biggest moment of all, in the most exceptional of circumstances. Eagle-eyed readers may have noticed that Issue 94, due out in early May 2020, was deferred until the



issue 76



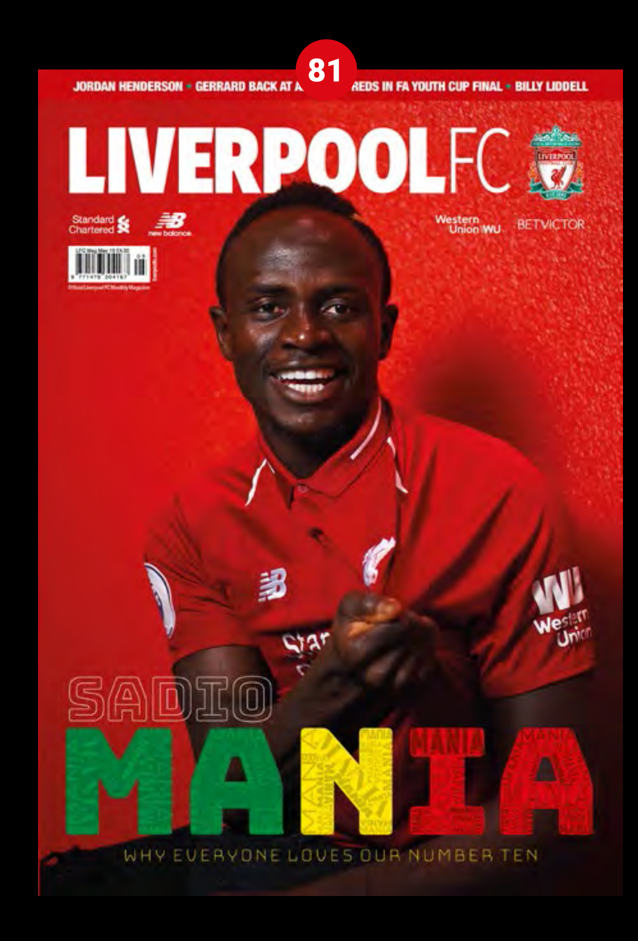
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following month because of the UK's first coronavirus lockdown.
 Elite football and the club magazine returned in June. The rest is off-the-scale history. The cover of Issue 95 carried a silhouette of Klopp, one arm aloft, with a backdrop of fans and the words 'WE BELIEVED'.
 (The boss incidentally has made four solo appearances on the cover, as have Virgil van Dijk and Daniel Sturridge. The most prolific are Jordan Henderson and Roberto Firmino both with six, then it's Sadio Mane and Philippe Coutinho with five each.)
 Issue 96 – such an emotional number for everyone connected with LFC – had as its star the red-ribboned Premier League trophy, and who wouldn't love to see a repeat in a few months' time? For now we hope you enjoy this one hundredth edition. Thank you for reading – it's been a blast.



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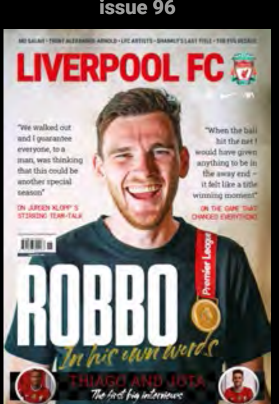
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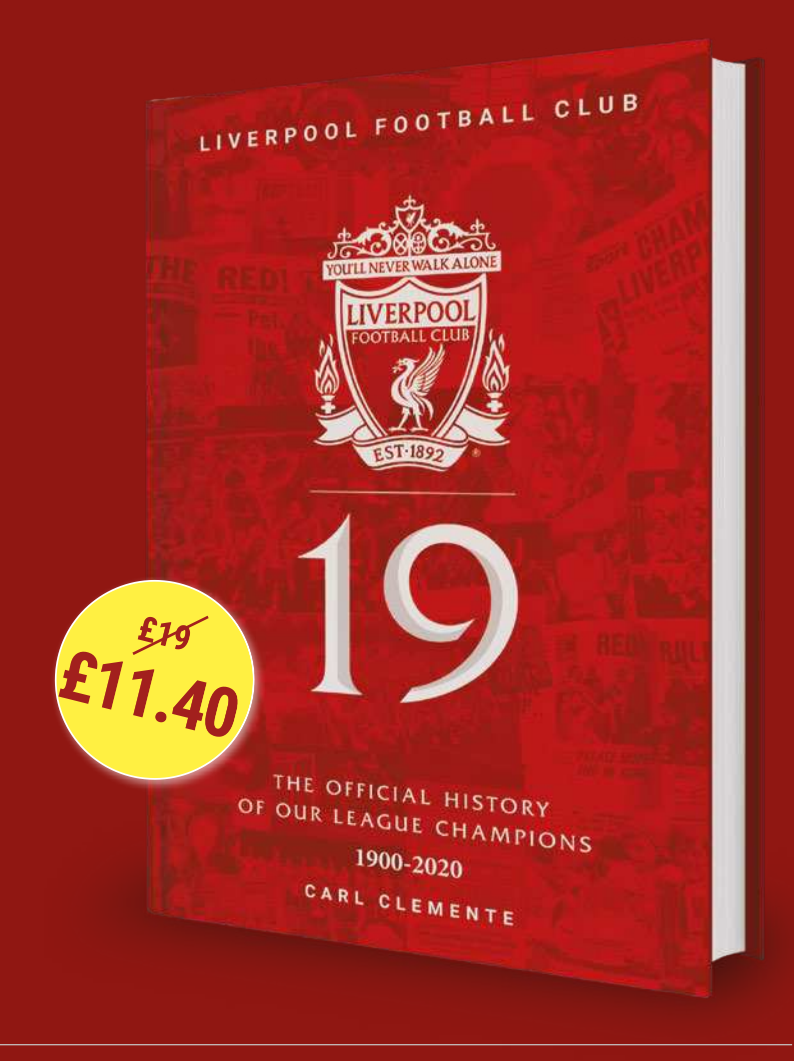


THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF OUR LEAGUE CHAMPIONS

When Jordan Henderson lifted the Premier League trophy in 2020, it was Liverpool Football Club's 19th league title.

To celebrate the achievement, this book details the full story of each top flight title success, a journey which started in September 1900. Packed with anecdotes, facts and statistics, this thoroughly researched, impressive offering includes the thoughts and opinions of the players, managers, protagonists and supporters who were involved in delivering the 'Holy Grail' of English football to the Anfield trophy cabinet.

Referred to as the club's 'bread and butter' by the great Bill Shankly, number 19 is still fresh in the memory of fans, but how does the recent record-breaking season compare to the other 18 occasions when the Reds were crowned champions of England?



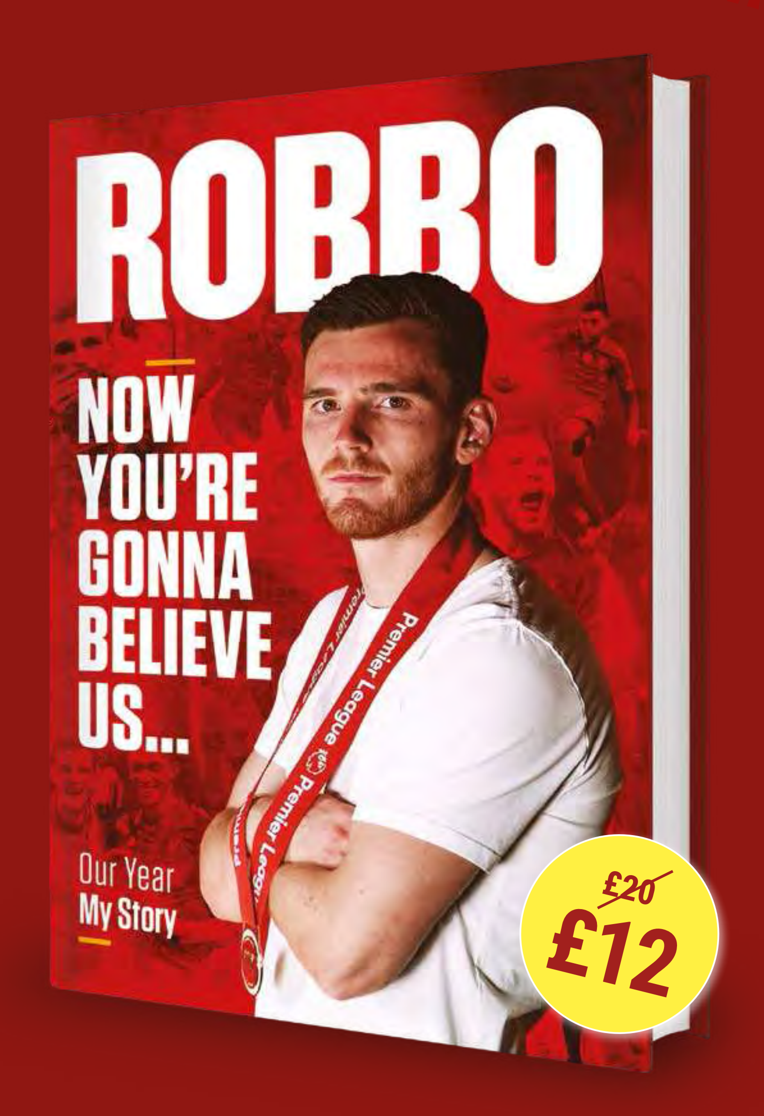


2019-20

NOTES ON A SEASON

The season of 2019/20 will live long in the memory. Led by Jürgen Klopp, Liverpool emerged as Premier League winners for the first time in the club's history, ending a 30-year title wait.

Notes on a Season tell the story of a thrilling and record-breaking campaign in the words of the boss and captain, Jordan Henderson, revealing their personal thoughts as captured in their inspirational matchday programme notes.



ROBBO

Our Year
My Story

Robbo: Now You're Gonna Believe Us is the inside story of an unrivalled period in the illustrious history of Liverpool Football Club – as seen through my eyes.

Taking you behind the scenes at Anfield and Melwood, I'll reveal how it all happened – how doubters turned to believers and brought the league title home after a 30-year wait.

From the dressing room to the pitch, this is my story of our year to remember.



Last year we brought you CH6MPIONS OF EUROPE, the brilliant official book commemorating Liverpool's triumph in Madrid with a special scroll of honour inside for fans. This year's companion volume is all about the PREMIER LEAGUE CHAMPIONS.

LIVERPOOL FC PREMIER LEAGUE CHAMPIONS is a gloriously evocative account of the season that saw Jürgen Klopp's mighty Reds set all sorts of new records as they claimed the title. This commemorative hardback's 320 pages feature exclusive photography, revealing insight from Klopp and his Kop stars, and the season chronicled in full by the editorial team behind the club's monthly magazine and matchday programme.



See our website for postage and packaging prices. UK orders received by Thursday 17th December will be dispatched in time for Christmas delivery, subject to Royal Mail.


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L.F.C.
AXA

NAT'S LIFE

Pre-season friendlies, sudden loan-spells, Merseyside cup derbies, German promotion battles… Nat Phillips has learned to be prepared for anything

Interview: William Hughes

Football changes quickly, especially amid the chaos of the current fixture programme. Take Liverpool centre-back Nat Phillips, all set for a move ahead of the October transfer-deadline only for the deal to fall through.

Later that month he was making a man-of-the-match Premier League debut in the Reds' 2-1 win over West Ham United at Anfield.

The 23-year-old knows all too well that it is best to make plans lightly, however. Back in the summer of 2016, he was all set to start a new chapter in the United States before the Reds came calling. Phillips had secured a scholarship at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte to study economics and continue playing football, with the aim of being drafted by the MLS.

After a spell at Bolton Wanderers where his dad Jimmy was academy director, he'd been training with Huddersfield Town to maintain fitness ahead of crossing the Atlantic.

But then he received a phone-call from Liverpool enquiring whether he would like to join them in Germany as part of their pre-season preparations. He jumped at the chance and put his studies on hold.

Things went well but also worked out in a slightly different manner than he'd envisaged after he agreed a new long-term contract last August.

Nat had anticipated a loan-spell in order to gain first-team experience, but as he explains, the LFC coaching staff had a slightly different destination than normal planned for the next stage of his development.

His temporary home was to be VfB Stuttgart in the 2. Bundesliga, a team expected to challenge for promotion back to the German top-flight after relegation in 2018/19.

"I more or less signed my contract and then the same day went home and packed my bags and flew out to Stuttgart that afternoon before training the day after.

"Once I was there it was just straight into training. I actually played a little sooner than I'd anticipated and made my first appearance in the second half of a cup game because one of the experienced centre-backs was injured.

"After that I didn't play as much as I would've liked to have done, but I still got a decent amount of games and started to play a bit more towards the end of the first half of the season, towards the Christmas break.

"Then when I went back after briefly returning here in January,











SOME MIGHT SAY IT WAS A BRAVE MOVE TO GO TO STUTTGART BUT THEY WERE A DOMINANT TEAM THAT PLAYED A LOT OF POSSESSION FOOTBALL AND I WANTED TO IMPROVE MY ABILITY ON THE BALL

I played a lot more after Christmas. We had a new manager [Pellegrino Matarazzo] and he seemed to take a liking to me.

"I met him a bit later than the rest of the lads because I was over here to play in the Liverpool-Everton FA Cup game and provide back-up when he'd first gone in.

"I joined up with the [Stuttgart] mid-season camp at the end of the Christmas break that they had in Marbella and met him out there. It helped in that he is American-born and speaks perfect English so we spoke to each other and just got on well.

"He was very approachable and he would ask us our opinions as well. It was nice that he placed trust in me and when I went back to being in the starting eleven, I was probably a bit more of a key feature in the side than I was before Christmas, which was nice.

"Things started to progress nicely from there. We went on a decent run and I was playing every game.

"Unfortunately the coronavirus break disrupted both my momentum and the team's momentum and by the time we resumed a few of the other more experienced centre-backs were back fit and I lost my place in the team after the first game back."

Nonetheless, the aim of promotion was achieved with VfB finishing as runners-up to champions Arminia Bielefeld.

"The manager had gone with some more experienced lads to try and see the season out, but I got another appearance in, I think the third game before the end of the season, because we'd hit a bit of a bad run so he switched the team up again.

"I got back in the team and we had a really good game against SV Sandhausen and won that 5-1. I would have probably played the last two games as well but unfortunately I got tonsillitis before the penultimate game and couldn't be involved, although after that game [a 6-0 away-win at 1.FC Nurnberg] we were more or less promoted anyway by goal-difference."

Although many observers might consider such a move a brave step, Nat was happy to embrace the challenges of learning a new language and a new culture on and off the field.

"Don't get me wrong, it was difficult when I first went out there and being brand new in a new team is difficult anyway,

WHEN WE WON THE PREMIER LEAGUE I WAS WATCHING IT AT HOME AND CELEBRATING, AND THE NEXT DAY AT STUTTGART I DROVE INTO TRAINING WITH YNWA BLASTING THROUGH MY CAR SPEAKERS TO MAKE SURE THEY KNEW!

but when you don't speak the language it makes it a bit harder to socialise and get along with the other lads. But the guys were great with me because a lot of them spoke English.

"Adapting to a new place was difficult but after Christmas I felt a lot more settled. I was better with the language, I was playing more and the experience was really enjoyable.

"Some might say it was a brave move but personally another aspect of the decision to go out there was that part of my game that I wanted to improve on was my ability on the ball.

"My options over here at the time were mostly in League One where perhaps I wouldn't have been able to work on that as much. It would probably have been more defensive and playing for territory as opposed to the possession-based football I experienced out there.

"Stuttgart were very much a dominant team in that league and saw a lot of possession so it was another opportunity to work on that side of things for myself.

"The whole experience in itself was something that I look back on fondly. It was my first season playing first-team football and to get promotion as well was an unbelievable experience.

"Living abroad and having to learn the language...all these different things were a nice life-experience as well as a footballing experience."

As well as developing his ability on the ball, Phillips also gained invaluable experience in playing for a team that was expected to win every game.

"There was a lot of pressure when I first went in," he recalls. "I spoke to some of the lads and it wasn't a matter of *if* we went up, it was *how* we would go up – whether we'd come first or second or win the play-off. There was no question of whether we would actually go up because that was just an expectation rather than something that we were aiming towards.

"So there was a lot of pressure in that but at the same time the club is one that should be playing in the top division and I think everyone at the club knew that.

"A lot of people from outside Germany would think of Stuttgart and think of them as a top Bundesliga side. You just look at the stadium that holds 60,000 and I think we were getting 50,000 when fans were allowed in every week and that was in the Second Division, so they have a massive following, a really loyal support base and a club with great facilities and historically were a competitive side in the top division.

"So there was a lot of pressure to get us back up there but we also knew that we should be doing it anyway and that we were capable of doing it."

Like all players, Nat is desperate for fans to return to stadiums and says playing in front of big crowds was another important step for him.

"I'd done it with Liverpool but for friendly games with less





riding on them. Of course you want to win pre-season games but they're more about the progression towards the season starting. So that was another thing I benefited from, playing in front of crowds like that and having to perform to a high level without letting the pressure get to you.

"Before the West Ham game, the FA Cup tie against Everton was the only competitive fixture that I'd played in for Liverpool where it's been 'must-win' in that sense."

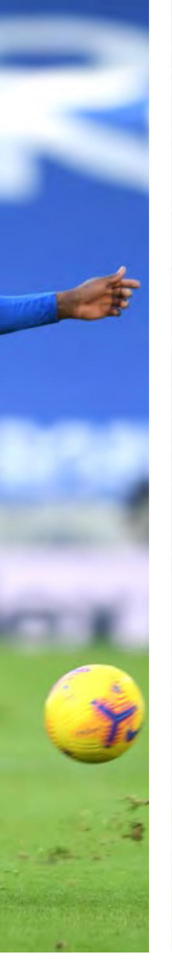
Liverpool were confirmed as champions three days before Stuttgart's final game of the season against SV Darmstadt 98. If any of Nat's team-mates weren't aware of events in England, he wasn't shy in letting them know!

"I was watching it at home and enjoying seeing all the videos come through, so I was celebrating as well. The next day I drove into training and was blasting *YNWA* through my car speakers as the other lads were getting out of their cars to make sure they knew as well!"

Now that he's back in the Reds dressing-room, however, there is no mention of last season's achievements. "The feeling I get is that people have had a taste for it and they want more. They are looking at what they can do next to improve.

"I think now they know they can do it. They've won the Champions League, they've won the Premier League, they know they're capable of doing it, so now it's seeing how far they can take that.

"That was the feeling I got from first seeing the lads in





CENTRE-HALVES

LFC starting combinations under Jürgen Klopp (up to and including 1 December 2020)

44 Van Dijk/Gomez

42 Van Dijk/Matip

38 Van Dijk/Lovren

37 Matip/Lovren

19 Lovren/Klavan

14 Lovren/Sakho

13 Matip/Klavan

10 Lovren/Toure

6 Skrtel/Sakho; Skrtel/Lovren; Toure/Skaho

5 Matip/Lucas

3 Matip/Fabinho; Gomez/Fabinho

2 Ilori/Enrique; Sakho/Lucas; Skrtel/Lucas; Klavan/Lucas; Gomez/Lucas; Gomez/Klavan; Van Dijk/Klavan; Van Dijk/Fabinho; Gomez/Phillips; Van Dijk/R Williams

1 Lovren/Caulker; Lucas/Ilori; Skrtel/Toure; Lucas/Toure; Lovren/Lucas; Lovren/Fabinho; Lovren/Gomez; Gomez/Van den Berg; Van den Berg/Boyes; Gomez/Henderson; Van den Berg/Hoever; Gomez/R Williams; Gomez/Matip; Matip/R Williams; Fabinho/Phillips



training and that's the sort of mindset that runs through the team. It's just a team full of winners and players who have set those levels for themselves."

And after a long wait Nat finally found himself part of that Liverpool line-up in the Premier League as he helped the Reds come from behind to beat the Hammers on the final day of October.

"I was delighted with the way the game went for myself but, and I know it sounds a bit like a cliché but the result was the most important thing with what we are trying to achieve. That was the biggest thing for me.

"During the time I've been here and the time I've spent with the first-team, I've had various different knock-backs in terms of injuries and things like that which have been difficult, so it was a really nice feeling driving home after the game to know that I had finally had that opportunity and made my Premier League debut.

"That was especially the case with the nature of how it unfolded whereby it looked like I might not have been a Liverpool player anymore three or four weeks earlier and then it all changed so quickly in that time. It is another example of how you've always got to stay prepared for when the call comes, even when things might not be going your way."

One lasting legacy of his spell in southwest Germany is the fact that while his Stuttgart manager spoke to him in English, his Liverpool boss sometimes addresses him in his own mother tongue!

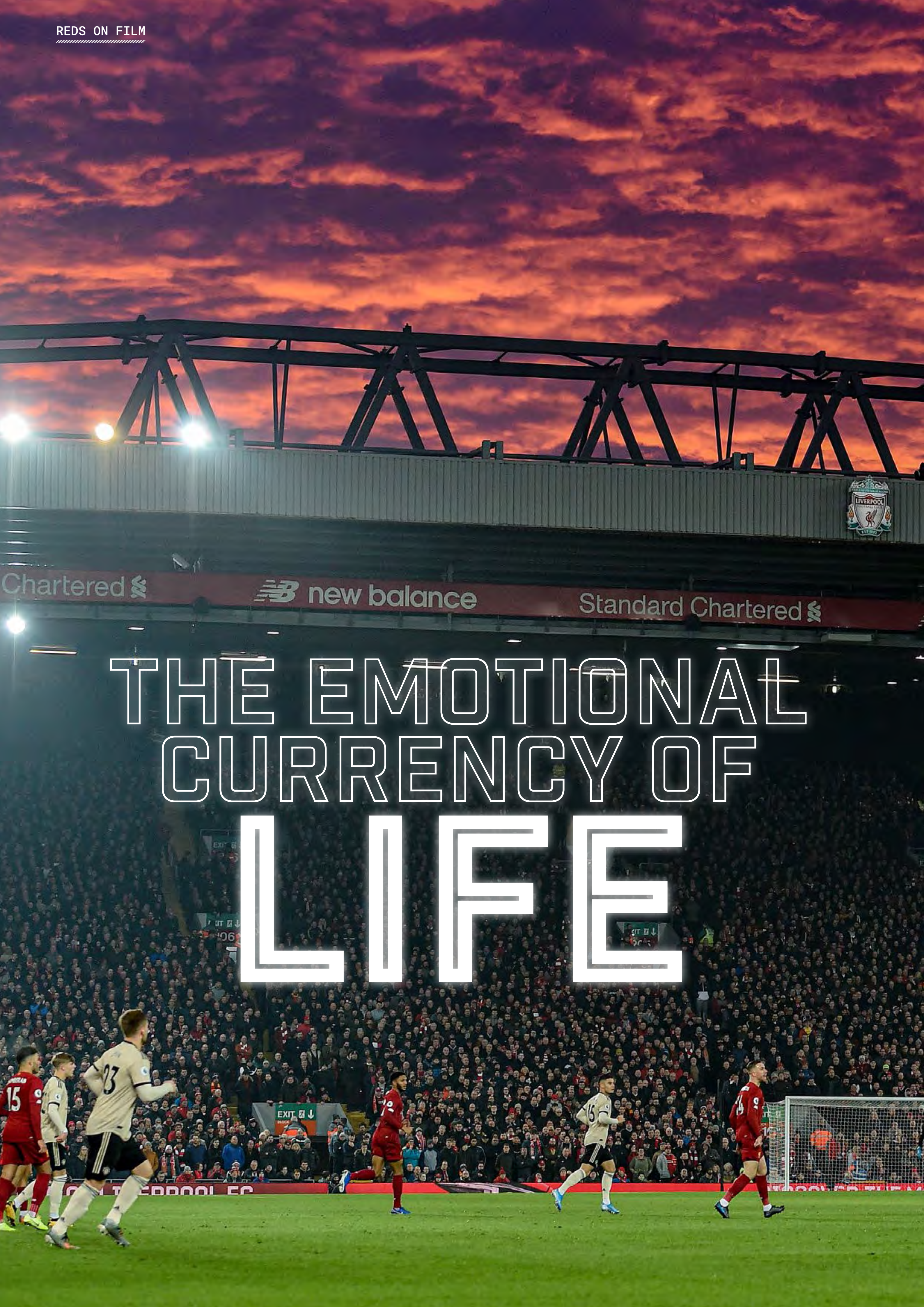
"He mostly speaks to me in English but we still have the occasional exchange of German phrases! Obviously there are a few lads in the squad who can speak German as well so I'll bring it up every now and again to show that I can still do it before I revert back to English!"

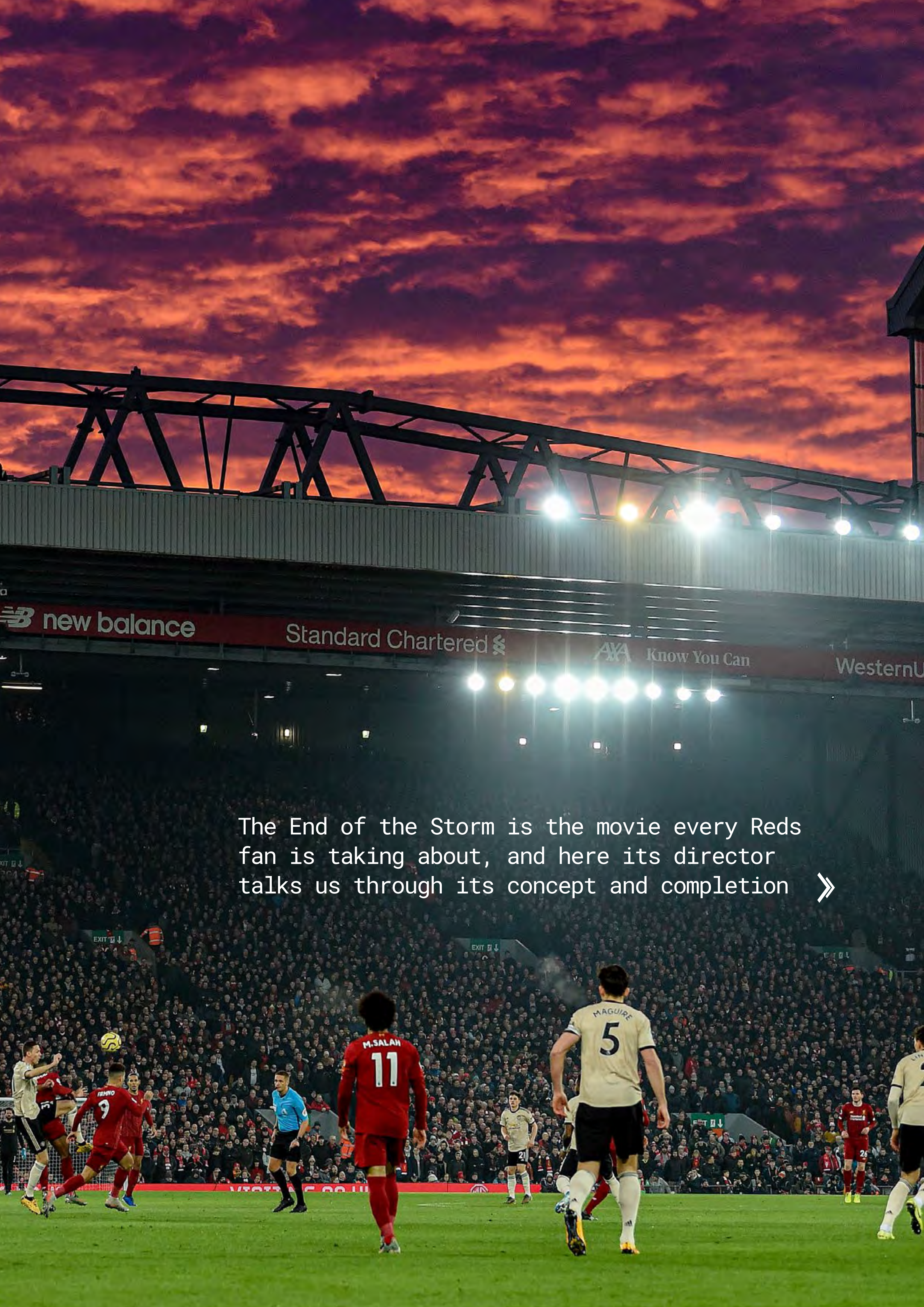
Now with Virgil van Dijk and Joe Gomez sadly set for lengthy spells on the sidelines, Nat is focused on making sure he is ready for any first-team opportunities that come his way and he produced another excellent display in the draw at Brighton last month.

"All I can do really is make sure that I stay fit and ready as far as the next game in hand is concerned. The games are coming so thick and fast that you can't look too far ahead.

"You've just got to concentrate on the next challenge ahead, deal with that and then move onto the next one."

THE EMOTIONAL CURRENCY OF LIFE





The End of the Storm is the movie every Reds fan is taking about, and here its director talks us through its concept and completion

A brand-new feature-length documentary, telling the gripping inside-story of Liverpool FC's 2019/20 Premier League winning campaign, has been released.

The End Of The Storm features candid interviews with Jürgen Klopp and Sir Kenny Dalglish, plus Alisson, Virgil van Dijk, Jordan Henderson, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane. It encapsulates the highs of going 25 points clear, the lows of the season being suspended due to coronavirus, and the joy of Liverpool supporters across the world as the Reds' 30-year wait for a Premier League title finally ended.

The magazine's Chris McLoughlin spoke to the film's director, Emmy Award-nominated James Erskine, about his cinematic celebration of the champions of England...

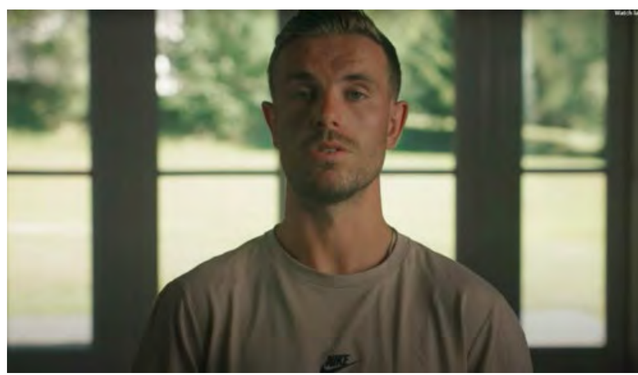
CM: It took a full 12 months for last season to finish. Did you start to make *The End of the Storm* at the beginning of the campaign not knowing how the Premier League title race would unfold? Or was it a case of seeing how well Liverpool started season 2019/20 and then putting it together?

JE: We came into it halfway through the season. We were actually preparing it in earnest just before the pandemic hit. Liverpool had their own crew embedded, capturing material, but they themselves were nervous about doing a film predicated on their success given the 30 years of disappointment and not wishing to come across as arrogant.

CM: It was reported a couple of years ago that Amazon approached Liverpool to be the subject of their *All Or Nothing* fly-on-the-wall series, but were turned down by Jürgen Klopp as he believes people's behaviour can change in front of cameras. How difficult was it to get him on board?

JE: I don't know if you have seen the series *This Is Football* on Amazon, but it is a series I made. The lead film is about the Rwandan genocide and how football was used to overcome it.

It focused on three Liverpool fans. It was very successful as a film, but it was also seen by [Liverpool director] Mike Gordon and by Jürgen. They were both moved by that film, as were other people at the club, so there was an open door because of how we'd sort of explored the emotional value of football.



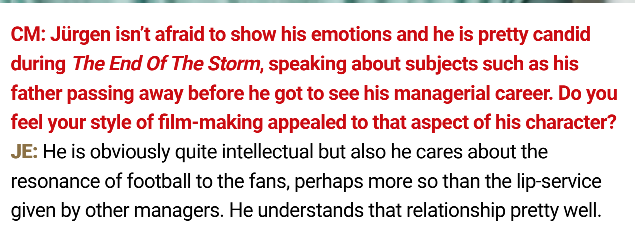












CM: Jürgen isn't afraid to show his emotions and he is pretty candid during *The End Of The Storm*, speaking about subjects such as his father passing away before he got to see his managerial career. Do you feel your style of film-making appealed to that aspect of his character?

JE: He is obviously quite intellectual but also he cares about the resonance of football to the fans, perhaps more so than the lip-service given by other managers. He understands that relationship pretty well.

It obviously helped that he had seen previous films of mine so that he was comfortable with whatever I was going to do with the material. But yeah, he was very open and pretty relaxed that day and I'd like to think it's because I'm a good interviewer that I was able to make him feel secure talking about those things. It makes a massive difference to the film.

I've watched hundreds of his press-conferences and I think one of the remarkable things about Jürgen is that he really tries to answer the question in front of him. He addresses the person asking the question rather than giving a stock answer. So it's about asking the right questions in the right ways.

I've interviewed thousands of people and very few of them have that characteristic that they almost have to be honest. It was a long time ago but weirdly [American film director] Francis Ford Coppola was similar. It was literally in him that he couldn't give you the same answer twice – not because he was trying to lie to me, but he wanted to be in the moment and Jürgen really has that as well.

He wants to give you the answer he feels in the moment rather than have a 'greatest hits' line that he pushes out.

CM: In terms of the players who feature in your film, Alisson, Virgil van Dijk, Jordan Henderson, Roberto Firmino and Sadio Mane are the most prominent. Did you deliberately focus predominantly on the spine of the title-winning team?

JE: It was deliberate in that I really wanted to be able to build enough characters into it, so that you felt you had got to know people, which necessarily means not having everybody speak.

Within that, I wanted to have the feeling that we have moved all the way through the pitch so there is a tactical underpinning to it. We didn't just choose five midfielders or three forwards, so you really got a different perspective and it also allowed us to edit the film across the different matches in different ways.

It may not be apparent on the first watch, but you do see games through different tactical positions – through forwards, through midfielders and through defenders.

CM: Another person to feature is Sir Kenny Dalglish. How important was it to speak to him?

JE: I think it was really important in the end because the film is about fathers. It's about the handing-down from father to son, father to daughter, and that one particular football club is the emotional currency of life.

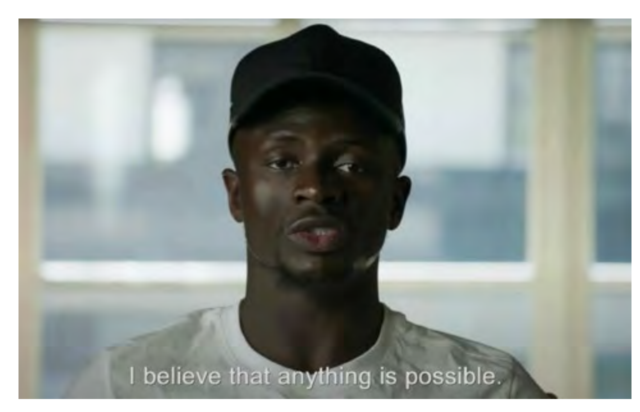
It was great with Kenny because he brought in Jordan Henderson but then gave him the Premier League trophy at the end. It was like a father giving a gift to a son – 'birthing' him into the club and then getting to watch his greatest achievement. I thought that was important.

It also respects the longevity. Kenny was there and was successful in the Seventies and Eighties but also had the trauma of 1989 and went back as manager in 2011, sewing the seeds that Jürgen has cultivated. Jordan wouldn't be at the club if it wasn't for Kenny, and I was pretty interested in how that connected to Jürgen.

Taking responsibility is a big theme in the film and I think that's one of Jürgen's big things. He makes his players take responsibility, which can be incredibly empowering if it's done in the right way.









CM: Reds supporters from Liverpool to Brazil and America to Wuhan feature prominently. How did you select them?

JE: Rachel [Ramsay], one of our producers, went out and found people, but we wanted to make sure that we covered Liverpool fans widely and in as many time-zones as possible. We wanted to cover a range of ethnicities, gender and age. We wanted a feeling of universality so there was a sense of the single family of Liverpool.

When the pandemic hit, I knew that I wanted to try to find a fan in Wuhan. I didn't know if we'd be able to find one, but we got lucky with that and it created a huge emotional kick. While it was all hunky-dory in Liverpool, that guy was already suffering in Wuhan and football was his last connection to normality.

Being able to hang out with his mates had been taken away from him so it was really important to crystallise his identity – that the last vestige of his identity was to put on that red shirt and watch Liverpool.





CM: You tell some stories in *The End Of The Storm*, such as Simon Mignolet's departure, through the use of cartoons, almost in the style of the opening credits in the old BBC school drama *Grange Hill*. How did that come about?

JE: It came about organically. My editor Avi [Avdhesh Mohla], who is a Man United fan, is a brilliant editor and edited my other film out at the moment about Billie Holiday. I said to him that I don't want this to feel like any other football documentary and I really want you to have fun with it, so go crazy, do some wacky stuff and see what comes up.

He did this crazy cut that already felt like a cartoon, so I said to make it into a cartoon. We knew a couple of cartoonists so we got them in to do that because I just wanted to have fun. Football should have joy at its heart. Like Socrates the footballer said, "What matters is joy."







CM: You've got a really good mix of artists on the soundtrack from Chelcee Grimes at the start to Lana del Rey singing *You'll Never Walk Alone* at the end. When I heard her version of *YNWA* it felt like I was watching the scene in *The Shawshank Redemption* when Andy Dufresne plays Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* over the PA system, bringing the entire prison to a standstill. How did you get her involved?

JE: I wanted the soundtrack to sound different from traditional football films. I wanted to try to use a lot more female vocalists, to be honest, against the male voices, so I identified the Jetta track [*Feels Like Coming Home*].

Lana del Rey has the same manager as Chelcee Grimes so when we started out we went to all the record companies and said, "Have you got any Liverpool fans who fancy doing a piece?" We got sent the demo for Chelcee's *Liverpool* song, which was only being written at that point. It's at the beginning of the film and I really loved it.

I spoke to her manager about who else they have and we knew that Lana del Rey is a Liverpool fan so I said to him, "What do you reckon, would she do something?" He's a Liverpool fan too so he said, "Maybe, she can only say no." But she said yes.

I wanted to have a global star for a global club at the end, not just something feeling too cosy in Merseyside. Hopefully it will be number one at Christmas!







CM: Finally, in terms of your overall career – and you've worked on a huge variety of productions including football films *One Night in Turin* and *Shooting For Socrates* – how did working with Liverpool FC compare?

JE: Gosh. Every project has good moments and bad moments, but one has always said, 'Just try to do your best'. Liverpool were supportive and helpful, doing their best in the situation, and that was great. Obviously one always wants more, but we found a way to work together to bring the emotion across of reaching *The End Of The Storm*.

WIN THE DVD!

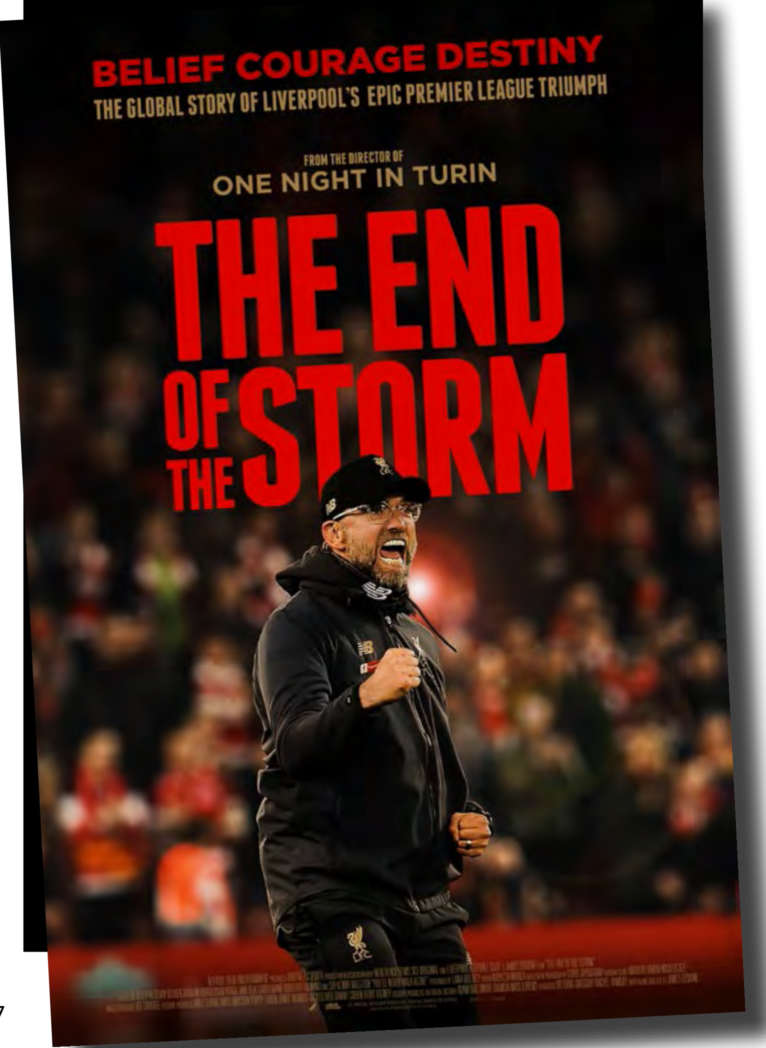
Directed by James Erskine and distributed by Altitude, *The End Of The Storm* is an October Films, Brutal Media and New Black Films co-production. Available now on digital, DVD & Blu Ray, it will also be shown on Sky Documentaries in 2021, but you can own a copy on DVD if you're lucky enough to win our exclusive competition.

We have got five copies to give away and all you have to do to enter is tell us:

Who scored Liverpool's fifth goal in the 5-3 win against Chelsea on the night the Reds lifted the Premier League trophy?

Email your answer, name and address with 'End of the Storm Competition' in the subject line to liverpoolfcmag@reachsport.com. Closing date is Monday 4 January 2021 and winners will receive their prizes as soon as possible.

Normal competition rules apply. Good luck!





A PASSION FOR FOOTBALL

"Things are passed down from fathers to sons and that creates a special feeling…" Former Reds boss Rafael Benitez speaks about a love that never dies

For Liverpool's recent Champions League group game against Ajax at Anfield, the matchday programme ran a fascinating UEFA interview with Rafael Benitez. Since we couldn't quite fit the entire interview into the issue, we saved some for this edition of the magazine.

In the Ajax programme Rafa discussed the two Champions league finals against AC Milan in 2005 and 2007, specifically the very different feel to each occasion and the changes of personnel. Here he talks about spot-kicks, luck in sport, Torres at Liverpool and Torres at Chelsea, and what makes Scousers special…

RAFA, YOU GUIDED LIVERPOOL ALL THE WAY TO THE CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL IN 2005 BUT ULTIMATELY HOW MUCH OF A PART DOES LUCK PLAY IN WINNING A GAME LIKE THAT ON PENALTIES?

There's a luck factor that we can't neglect, but if you train and work hard, the luckier you become.

The following year we won the FA Cup by adopting the same approach, with Pepe Reina saving the penalties, and why was that? Because we'd spent a year analysing information on penalty-takers.

If you're your team's penalty-taker, you can pick one spot to place it today and another spot on another day, and so on. But when you're not a regular penalty-taker and you step up to take a penalty, no matter what the circumstances are, when it's in a final you pick the spot that you're most comfortable with. Of the penalty-takers we knew who four of the five were and this gave our goalkeeper a big advantage.

HAVE YOU ALWAYS HAD SUCH ATTENTION TO DETAIL AS A MANAGER?

I'm going to tell you a little anecdote that some people are aware of but others aren't. When I was 13 years old I would write down the starting XI of the team [I played in]. When the game ended, like a good journalist I'd note down the scorers etcetera and I'd give out marks – and I always had a good mark of course!

At 16 years old I had a player-manager role in the summer and started thinking more as a coach. I used MS-DOS [a computer operating system]. Many people won't even know what that is. Then Windows came along. At that time I already had a system, a particular software where I monitored the activity of each of my players.

I always looked for training drills and exercises. I went to Italy and



Rafa unveiled, 16 June 2004

Interview: UEFA.com



to the Italian Football Federation and I photocopied every magazine, every exercise, and analysed them. I saw maybe 20 games from Arrigo Sacchi's Milan and I noted down every single thing that happened, so I could later teach my players.

For example, we played a pressing system at the youth ranks of Real Madrid when no one else was playing a pressing system. We almost always won, of course, because we had the best players, but on top of that they were crushing wins, so they were much more attractive.

But tactics aside, the key is always to have good players – that helps a lot.

YOU'VE GOT AN INTERESTING THEORY AS TO WHY LIVERPOOL LOST THAT SECOND CHAMPIONS LEAGUE FINAL AGAINST AC MILAN…

Well, I think we lost that final when we arrived because UEFA chooses the hotels and then they had to make adjustments and when we arrived we didn't have a good hotel. We didn't have good beds and [Peter] Crouch wouldn't fit in any of them!

He's very tall and the players would fall out. They lost their balance when they turned and I asked for the beds to be changed at once, but we were fighting against the clock. We were somewhere uncomfortable and we tried to make some adjustments to the beds.

There weren't enough rooms for everyone and after the final, which we lost, I left my wife and the chief scout's wife in my room, and he and I went for a walk. We were walking until 7am without sleeping because we didn't have a room and you are obviously going to be thinking about the match. On top of that, it was raining, so we had a great night!

True story: Crouchie's feet definitely stuck out of the bed in Athens

YOU SIGNED FERNANDO TORRES THAT SUMMER OF 2007, AND AT THE TIME HE INSISTED THAT YOU WEREN'T BUYING HIM SIMPLY BECAUSE HE WAS SPANISH – IS THAT TRUE?

Yes, it's true… I'm telling you things here that I've never told anyone before, but I think they're interesting. I went to Spain with [then club chief executive] Rick Parry specifically to sign Fernando.

We met with [Atletico Madrid CEO] Miguel Angel Gil and his people and that's when we did all of the negotiations, which were pretty tough.

We signed him with the firm belief that Fernando was going to help us and that he'd make all of the difference because he had power and attributes that could be decisive in the Premier League.

He did indeed go on to do very well, I think there was a stage when Fernando was the best striker in the world, with the understanding and link with [Steven] Gerrard there in behind him. He was decisive and I placed a lot of faith in him.

However, when Fernando went to Chelsea he failed to retain that same level of performance and one of the reasons that [Roman] Abramovich appointed me at Chelsea was to see if we could get Fernando back to his best.

In that season [2012/13] Fernando scored 16 goals again and showed that he still had that potential. However, he's a lad that needs to feel loved and appreciated and to know that the things being done around him, in his team, are being done properly. That then boosts his confidence and he performs far better.



As he rightly said, it wasn't the fact that he was Spanish, it was because he was a good player who could produce good performances and score goals.

YOU'VE WORKED IN A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES AND CITIES – WHAT MAKES LIVERPOOL SUCH A PASSIONATE PLACE WHEN IT COMES TO FOOTBALL?

I think Scousers – I'll also mention Geordies in Newcastle because there's something similar about them – are hard-working people who are thankful to those who make a commitment and give their best. And I've always faced tough situations.

Other people know recent English history better than me. If Scousers feel they've been treated unfairly, they come together to be stronger as a group. So you have the atmosphere that results from that, the passion for football, their hopes for their team and the pride they feel when they

Rafa was at the Run for the 96 in Stanley Park in 2017

see their team play well.

Those things are passed down from fathers to sons and that creates a special feeling in the stadium, in the city in general too because Everton fans share that same passion.

AND, AS THEY SAY, WHAT DOESN'T KILL YOU MAKES YOU STRONGER…

In Liverpool they welcomed me from the get-go. I saw they had an amazing passion for football from the start and high hopes. They're very competitive, they want to win, and that is infectious. We could think of it like a 'competitive gene' and it was there at Valencia too [when he was manager from 2001 to 2004].

People want to win, they come together, they work hard and commit to each other, they stand up for each other. The hard times a working-class and professional city like Liverpool has been through makes them stronger and live the good times more intensely. I've been at Napoli and the same thing applies there.

There are teams throughout the world who have that passion, particularly the teams with Latin roots, it's not so common in Anglo-Saxon sides.

They've got that passion and, as has always been said, the group is stronger than the sum of its parts.

Benitez got the best out of Fernando Torres

DO YOU BELIEVE THAT BILL SHANKLY WOULD HAVE BEEN PROUD OF HOW YOU CONDUCTED YOURSELF AS THE MANAGER OF HIS CLUB?

At all of the clubs I've been at, I've always tried to conduct myself in the right way. I sometimes get worked up, as we all do, but you try to go about things in the right way.

The relationship and allegiance that the fans and the city of Liverpool has with football is something I picked up on right from day one. You can be more or less excitable. You see Jürgen [Klopp] jumping and all the rest of it, but we all have our own way of expressing ourselves. But I strongly identified with it and, as I say, there are a lot of parallels with Newcastle.

My spell at Chelsea wasn't all that bad either, because there was a pretty good spirit within the club. But in Liverpool's case, and the same thing happened at Valencia, Tenerife, Napoli...when you have that bond and rapport with the fans, you ultimately become fond of the club and you feel as if it's part of who you are.

I think, in that sense, Bill Shankly would be happy that we at least tried and we integrated with the club and the city.



WHAT'S IT LIKE TO KNOW THAT YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE FOR THE REST OF YOUR LIFE?

I'm now obviously at Dalian Pro FC. In China, in Hong Kong and throughout Asia you're constantly bumping into Liverpool fans who remind you of Istanbul.

In the last few days I've had someone from Russia, another person from Armenia, a couple of people from Hong Kong and another pair from China and they were all, "Istanbul – wow." Two of them brought the match ticket from the game in Istanbul for me to sign.

As you say, people will always remember that you're part of Liverpool, part of Liverpool's history.

Banter with Jürgen Klopp before a Newcastle-Liverpool game back in October 2017

David (left) with fellow ex-Red and LFC magazine columnist Neil Mellor

Jose Mourinho and Harry Kane are heading for Crosby

"BUZZING!"

Ex-Reds defender David Raven on how local side Marine are preparing for their FA Cup appointment with Jose, Harry and co

There was a moment this summer when David Raven seriously considered calling time on his footballing career.

The former Reds defender had spent 16 years putting his body through the rigours of the game and, at 35, was considering his options. He opted to carry on, moving back to Merseyside with Marine. It is a decision he doesn't regret!

His Liverpool debut came at Tottenham Hotspur in a League Cup tie fifth-round tie in December 2004. Next month things will come full circle when Spurs go to Rossett Park in Crosby, just north of Bootle, for an FA Cup third-round tie that has captured the imagination of the nation.

Thinking back to the night of his LFC debut, he recalls: "The things that stand out for me were that I was fine and calm and then when I got to the stadium and it was White Hart Lane! Then it hit me: wow, this is real.

"I remember the roar of the crowd for the first time because there were 36,000 there and I remember just wanting to play on and on and on.

"I didn't want the game to finish as I was on a high because it was my first time in front of a crowd, under lights, against the big players. I was super-nervous for the first 15, 20 minutes or so but then I wanted it to go on forever.

"It was just the best feeling in the world."

The game ended 1-1 after extra-time, necessitating a shoot-out for which David was down to take the Reds' fifth penalty.

Striker Fredi Kanoute's third effort for Spurs was saved by Jerzy Dudek and when midfielder Michael Brown also missed the home side's fourth attempt, Reds midfielder John Welsh had the chance to be the hero.

"I was down to take the fifth penalty and then Welshy slotted it away which saved me going up there. My knees would have been knocking I'm sure!"

> I HAD TO DECIDE WHETHER TO PLAY ON OR NOT AND I'D LIKE TO THINK I'M REAPING THE REWARDS NOW

That was one of four appearances David made for Liverpool's first-team but with experienced competition for the right-back berth in the shape of Steve Finnan and Josemi, the West Kirby-born player was loaned out to Tranmere Rovers before completing a permanent switch to Carlisle United in the summer of 2006.

He went on to spend 12 years in the professional game, making almost 350 appearances in the colours of Carlisle, Shrewsbury Town, Tranmere and Inverness Caledonian Thistle.

As he entered his thirties, thoughts started to turn towards a possible coaching career and he is now the holder of a UEFA 'A' coaching licence. In July 2018 he joined Warrington Town and took up a role coaching pupils at Ellesmere College in Shropshire.

"Getting involved in coaching or managing was the aim when I moved back from Scotland," he continues.

"To be honest, it's been difficult to find my feet again down here, but I feel like I've eventually done that with making connections in the world of coaching, and this cup run has been brilliant exposure for me.

"I want to stay in the game. I want to coach and I want to manage. I feel like I've got a lot to offer in that sense, so that would be the idea.

"The work at Ellesmere College has been great for my learning in terms of coaching and managing a programme but I've certainly got ambitions to stay in the game and go higher."

After a lot of soul-searching this summer, he decided to carry on playing and accepted an offer from Marine. "There was a moment where I had to dig deep down and question whether to play on or not because it does take a lot out of you," he explains.

"It's a lot of commitment not just time-wise but also putting your body through the mill all the time when you're 35 is not as easy as when you're 25, 30. I'm just so glad I made the right decision and knuckled down. I'd like to think I'm reaping the rewards from that now."

Marine have won seven games to reach this stage of the FA Cup – one more than it would require a Premier League side to win the competition.

Not many column-inches were given over to the Mariners' 2-1 win over Barnoldswick Town in the preliminary round back in September. Or to the 1-0 victory at Frickley Athletic ten days later when David's late goal helped them through the first of four qualifying rounds.

The first-round draw sent Marine to League Two Colchester United and they triumphed 5-3 on penalties after a 1-1 draw with David calmly converting the fourth kick.

"I'm not a penalty taker but I just thought it was a case of showing a bit of leadership as one of the most experienced lads in the team.

"Afterwards the manager [Neil Young] said to me, 'I didn't know you took penalties?' And I said, 'I don't!' We laughed and he said, 'If we'd have known we wouldn't have put you on it!'

"It was one of those where I went over and over it in my head, telling myself: strike it down the middle, strike it as firm and as clean as you can.

Interview: William Hughes

A LOT OF PEOPLE HAVE ASKED WHAT I'M GOING TO DO AGAINST HARRY KANE AND I JUST SAY I WILL PREPARE NORMALLY

That was what was going through my head against Havant as well."

Ah yes, Havant & Waterlooville. The score was locked at 0-0 in the final minute of extra-time and another shoot-out was looming large before captain Niall Cummins sent Marine into dreamland with a 120th-minute winner.

"It was funny because even as the game was going on and I was thinking about penalties and where I was going to put mine, I also knew that we were going to get one more chance. Even then it wasn't the prettiest of goals as it actually came off Niall's back!

"The buzz of winning in the last minute of extra-time is what it's all about isn't it? It doesn't get much better than that. You could see that by everyone's reaction. I've done it twice now in my career and it's just been the same buzz both times."

The other occasion was in the 2015 Scottish Cup semi-final against Celtic at Hampden Park. A certain Virgil van Dijk had given the Hoops an early lead but underdogs Inverness struck back to take the game into extra-time before going on to win 3-2.

"That amazing run where we went on to win the Scottish Cup was the highlight of my career. Scoring against Celtic in the last minute of extra-time in the semi-final is a memory I will never forget and I don't think any feeling will come close to that either."

Raven has, of course, seen the lows as well as highs of cup competitions. He was a member of the Liverpool team beaten 1-0 at Burnley in an FA Cup third-round tie at Turf Moor in 2005.

"Including the qualifying rounds this is the longest I've been in the FA Cup. I've never got further than the third round before.

"When you've been around the block a few times, you've got to remember the highs because there are so many lows in football. So when you do get a high you've got to hold onto it and remember it."

David watched the third-round draw at home and was as excited as anyone when Robbie Savage pulled out Tottenham's name after Marine.

"I left work a bit early that day to get back and watch it and I sat with my wife and my little girl. It was super-exciting and put a massive smile on my face.

"I suppose you either want someone who is relatively beatable or a massive team like your Liverpools, Evertons, Tottenhams or Arsenals. We got what we wanted really. We're not going to win the FA Cup so let's see what we can do in the meantime."

He says there has been an extra feel-good factor around Crosby since the cup run started gathering momentum.

"Even getting into the first and second rounds, the local community were buzzing with that. In such a tough year it's brought so much joy to people and I love the fact that it's affected people as well as it has.

"It's been really good for the community and for people like the chairman and manager because they just put their heart and soul into it. This is what they do it for.

"When Tottenham come to town the place is going to be buzzing. People will be seeing Jose Mourinho on the side at Marine where there's only a yard before the dugout starts! It's going to be a bit surreal.

"By the sounds of it he's going to bring some of his big-hitters. He knows the Marine fans want to see Gareth Bale, Harry Kane and these guys so I'm sure he'll give them some game-time. He wants to win so he's not going to play his academy side."

David admits he thought his chances of marking the England captain might have passed him by.

"I've had a lot of people say to me, 'What are you going to do against Harry Kane?' I just reply, 'Well I don't know anything else I can do other than prepare normally'.

"I'm not going to go and ask for his autograph or his shirt, I'm not interested in all that. As far as I'm concerned I'm going to give it as much as a 35-year-old part-time player can and I'll see where that brings me."

When he thinks back to that first appearance for Liverpool against Spurs he says the 16 years in between have flown by.

"It just feels like the blink of an eye. It's quite emotional to be perfectly honest and a bit nostalgic looking back at things. I'd like to think I've made the most of my career and I'm trying to make the most of this now.

"We should be able to have some sort of crowd in for the game and it will be fantastic for people to see these guys up-close. I remember when I was a kid seeing these kind of footballers and I was just mesmerised. I thought they were gods and that sticks with you.

"It will be great for the kids to come out and see these superstar players and that's what it's all about really.

"That's what football can do. It can bring people and communities together and make people dream. What if? What if we beat Tottenham? Who can imagine that?"



The moment that Marine made it into the third-round draw


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DEC / JAN

WHAT'S ON

FESTIVE FOOTBALL

Liverpool's busy holiday programme kicks off in earnest with a midweek home encounter with Jose Mourinho's Tottenham Hotspur.

The teams started December as joint-leaders of the Premier League and will be keen to gain an advantage when they meet for the first time this season at Anfield on Wednesday 16 December.

A quick turnaround then sees the Reds visit Crystal Palace for a 12.30pm kick-off on the Saturday. Following a rare week without a game, Liverpool then play three more times in six days with a home fixture against West Brom on Sunday 27 December followed by long trips to Newcastle United, on Wednesday 30 December, and Southampton, as they start their 2021 programme at St Mary's, on Saturday 2 January.

The following weekend then sees Jürgen Klopp's men in FA Cup action with the third-round draw handing them a return to Villa Park, scene of that shock 7-2 Premier League reverse back in October. It will be the ninth meeting of the sides in the tournament with the Reds having won six of the previous eight ties and Villa two.

Sunday 20 December is also a big night for Reds captain Jordan Henderson, who has been shortlisted for the 2020 BBC Sports Personality of the Year award.

The Liverpool midfielder is one of six contenders for the coveted annual prize.



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DEC/JAN

WHAT'S ON

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE DRAW



Monday 14 December is the day when Liverpool will discover the identity of their opponents in the last 16 of this season's UEFA Champions League.

The draw will take place in Nyon with ties to be played in February and March. As one of the eight group winners the Reds will be seeded and paired with one of the eight runners-up, who are unseeded.

As a seeded team, the Reds will play the first leg away from home in February and the second leg at Anfield in March. Teams from the same group or the same association cannot be drawn against each other at this stage of the tournament.

ALL THOSE YEARS AGO...

ANNIVERSARIES

20 years since Igor Biscan made his debut in a 1-0 win at Ipswich on 10 December 2000
40 years since Ian Rush made his debut in a 1-1 draw at Ipswich on 13 December 1980
66 years since LFC's record league defeat, 1-9 at Birmingham City, on 11 December 1954
65 years since Jimmy Melia made a scoring LFC debut v Nottingham Forest on 17 December 1955
54 years since Johan Cruyff scored twice at Anfield for Ajax in the second leg of a European Cup second-round tie on 14 December 1966
61 years since Liverpool's first game under Bill Shankly on 19 December 1959
95 years since striker Gordon Hodgson signed for Liverpool on 14 December 1925

And it's one year since Liverpool became world club champions on 21 December 2019...

Having fallen short on three previous occasions, Liverpool were determined to add the title of world champions to the club's roll of honour but knew it would be tough to accomplish.

It proved that way with the Reds needing two late shows from Roberto Firmino to claim the elusive silverware in Qatar.

Skipper Jordan Henderson started the semi-final against Monterrey at centre-back in the absence of the unwell Virgil van Dijk. The Mexicans proved to be tricky opponents with striker Rogello Funes Mori, twin-brother of ex-Everton centre-back Ramiro, quickly cancelling out Naby Keita's 12th-minute opener at the Khalifa International Stadium in Doha.

Monterrey produced 16 shots with Reds goalkeeper Alisson Becker proving his worth and later being named man of the match. Extra-time was looking a distinct possibility before substitute Firmino popped up to convert Trent Alexander-Arnold's 91st minute cross.

Klopp referenced a crowd chant afterwards when he said: "All you need is Alisson Becker, Alisson Becker. He was there in the decisive moments."

The final against Flamengo was equally testing. After a tight game Liverpool again thought they might have an injury-time winner when they were awarded a penalty for a foul by Rafinha on Sadio Mane. However, referee Abdulrahman Al Jassim reversed his verdict after checking the pitchside monitor following a VAR consultation.

And so the final went to extra-time with Firmino coolly striking the decisive blow in the 99th minute after being given a sight of goal by Mane, himself played through by Henderson.

"It feels great, really great," said Klopp afterwards. "I think we deserved to win tonight, we were the better side. In some moments we had a really good goalie and in all the other moments we were the dominant team. I'm really happy."

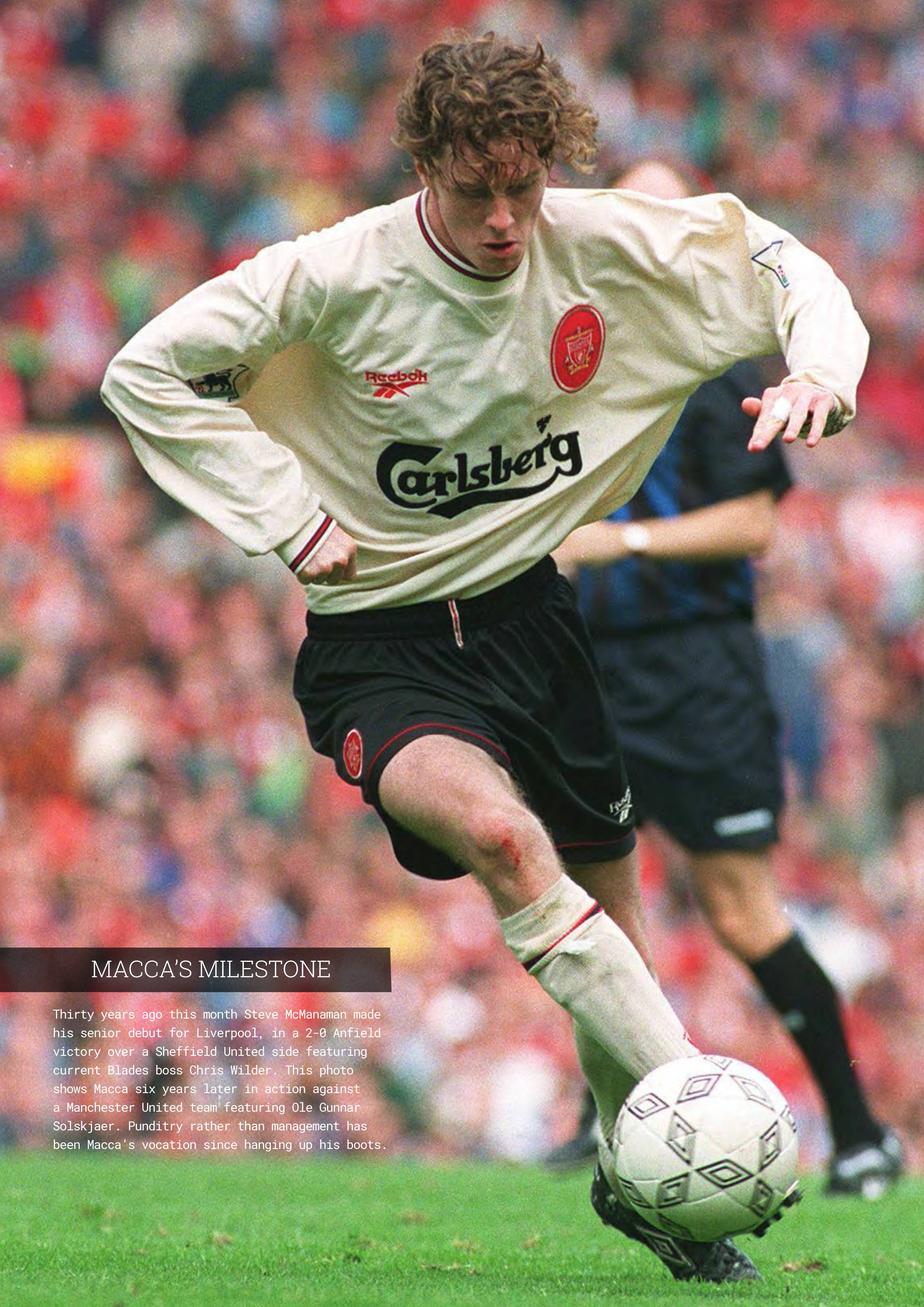


BIRTHDAYS



Steve Nicol 59 on 11 December
Stig Inge Bjornebye 51 on 11 December
Stephen Warnock 39 on 12 December
Daniel Agger 36 on 12 December
Michael Owen 41 on 14 December
Martin Skrtel 36 on 15 December
Ryan Babel 34 on 19 December
Sepp van den Berg 19 on 20 December
Gary McAllister 56 on Christmas Day
Leighanne Robe 27 on Boxing Day
Tom Clayton 20 on 27 December
Peter Krawietz 49 on 31 December





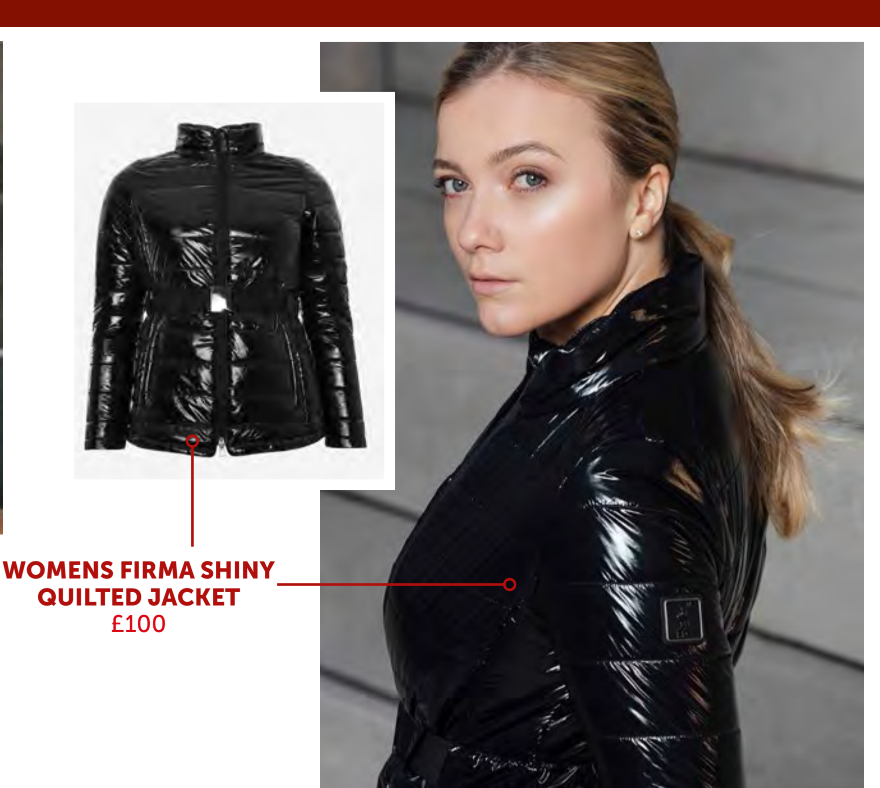
MACCA'S MILESTONE

Thirty years ago this month Steve McManaman made his senior debut for Liverpool, in a 2-0 Anfield victory over a Sheffield United side featuring current Blades boss Chris Wilder. This photo shows Macca six years later in action against a Manchester United team featuring Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. Punditry rather than management has been Macca's vocation since hanging up his boots.

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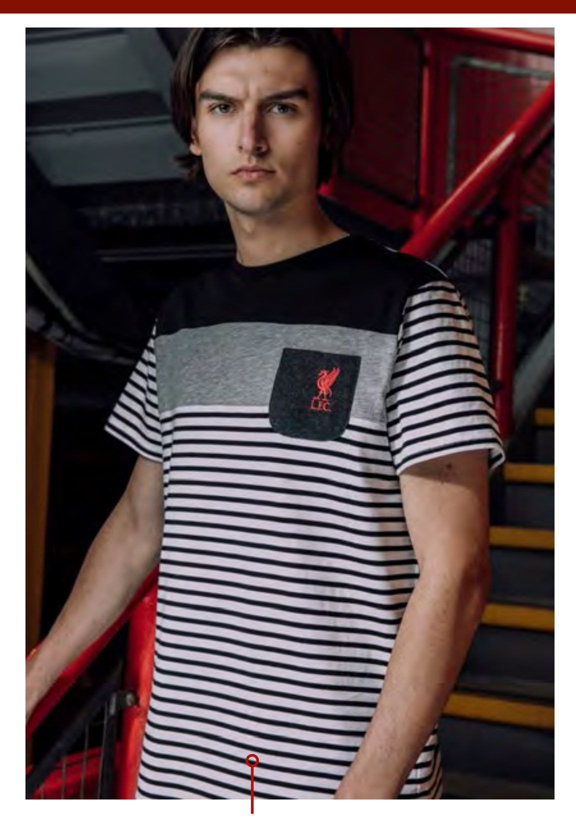


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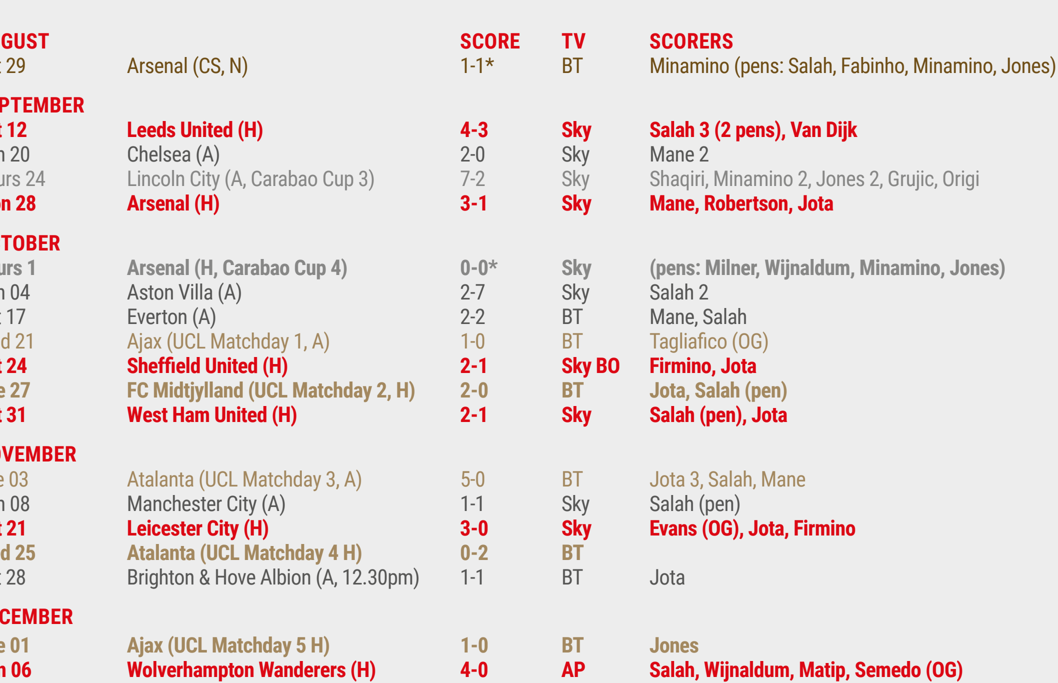
JUNIOR LIVERBIRD GRAPHIC GREY MARL HOODY
£20



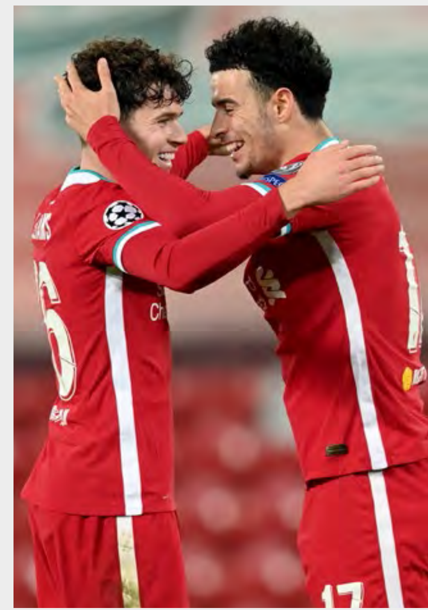
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Results & Fixtures 2020/21



AUGUST		SCORE	TV	SCORERS
Sat 29	Arsenal (CS, N)	1-1*	BT	Minamino (pens: Salah, Fabinho, Minamino, Jones)
SEPTEMBER				
Sat 12	**Leeds United (H)**	**4-3**	**Sky**	**Salah 3 (2 pens), Van Dijk**
Sun 20	Chelsea (A)	2-0	Sky	Mane 2
Thurs 24	Lincoln City (A, Carabao Cup 3)	7-2	Sky	Shaqiri, Minamino 2, Jones 2, Grujic, Origi
Mon 28	**Arsenal (H)**	**3-1**	**Sky**	**Mane, Robertson, Jota**
OCTOBER				
Thurs 1	Arsenal (H, Carabao Cup 4)	0-0*	Sky	(pens: Milner, Wijnaldum, Minamino, Jones)
Sun 04	Aston Villa (A)	2-7	Sky	Salah 2
Sat 17	Everton (A)	2-2	BT	Mane, Salah
Wed 21	Ajax (UCL Matchday 1, A)	1-0	BT	Tagliafico (OG)
Sat 24	**Sheffield United (H)**	**2-1**	**Sky BO**	**Firmino, Jota**
Tue 27	FC Midtjylland (UCL Matchday 2, H)	2-0	BT	Jota, Salah (pen)
Sat 31	**West Ham United (H)**	**2-1**	**Sky**	**Salah (pen), Jota**
NOVEMBER				
Tue 03	Atalanta (UCL Matchday 3, A)	5-0	BT	Jota 3, Salah, Mane
Sun 08	Manchester City (A)	1-1	Sky	Salah (pen)
Sat 21	**Leicester City (H)**	**3-0**	**Sky**	**Evans (OG), Jota, Firmino**
Wed 25	Atalanta (UCL Matchday 4 H)	0-2	BT	
Sat 28	Brighton & Hove Albion (A, 12.30pm)	1-1	BT	Jota
DECEMBER				
Tue 01	Ajax (UCL Matchday 5 H)	1-0	BT	Jones
Sun 06	**Wolverhampton Wanderers (H)**	**4-0**	**AP**	**Salah, Wijnaldum, Matip, Semedo (OG)**
Wed 09	FC Midtjylland (UCL Matchday 6 A, 5.55pm)		BT	
Sun 13	Fulham (A, 4.30pm)		Sky	
Wed 16	**Tottenham Hotspur (H, 8pm)**		**AP**	
Sat 19	Crystal Palace (A, 12.30pm)		BT	
Sun 27	**West Bromwich Albion (H, 4.30pm)**		**Sky**	
Wed 30	Newcastle United (A, 8pm)		AP	
JANUARY				
Sat 02	Southampton (A)			
Fri 08	Aston Villa (FA Cup 3, A, 7.45pm)		BT	
Wed 13	**Burnley (H)**			
Sat 16	**Manchester United (H)**			
Sat 23	(FA Cup 4)			
Wed 27	Tottenham Hotspur (A)			
Sat 30	West Ham United (A)			
FEBRUARY				
Wed 03	**Brighton & Hove Albion (H)**			
Sat 06	**Manchester City (H)**			
Wed 10	(FA Cup 5)			
Sat 13	Leicester City (A)			
Tue/Wed 16/17	(UCL R of 16 1)		BT	
Sat 20	**Everton (H)**			
Tue/Wed 23/24	(UCL R of 16 1)		BT	
Sat 27	Sheffield United (A)			
MARCH				
Sat 06	**Fulham (H)**			
Tue 09/10	(UCL R of 16 2)		BT	
Sat 13	Wolverhampton Wanderers (A)			
Tue/Wed 16/17	(UCL R of 16 2)		BT	
Sat 20	**Chelsea (H)**			
Sat 20	(FA Cup 6)			
APRIL				
Sat 03	Arsenal (A)			
Tue 06/07	(UCL Q-F 1)		BT	
Sat 10	**Aston Villa (H)**			
Tue/Wed 13/14	(UCL Q-F 2)		BT	
Sat 17	Leeds United (A)			
Sat 17	(FA Cup S-F)			
Sat 24	**Newcastle United (H)**			
Tue/Wed 27/28	(UCL S-F 1)		BT	
MAY				
Sat 1	Manchester United (A)			
Tue/Wed 04/05	(UCL S-F 2)		BT	
Sat 08	**Southampton (H)**			
Tue 11	West Bromwich Albion (A)			
Sat 15	Burnley (A)			
Sat 15	(FA Cup final)			
Sun 23	**Crystal Palace (H)**			
Sat 29	(UCL final)		BT	





All fixtures subject to change. *lost 5-4 on pens

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NEIL MELLOR

Diogo Jota has the ability and understanding to fit into this team – and most of all he has the mentality to be a Liverpool player

Diogo Jota's move to Liverpool came out of the blue. It was a little bit like when Fabinho arrived in 2018. There was no real speculation before a deal was done and, just like Fabinho, it has already proved to be a shrewd piece of business.

I saw Jota play for Wolves very early on after his arrival from Atletico Madrid in 2017. I was covering Wolves' trip to Burton Albion for Sky Sports Soccer Saturday and he scored the opening goal in a 4-0 win. It was a Championship game but I remember thinking: this kid is going to go on and be a big player. I just didn't think it would be at Liverpool.

In Jota I saw a forward who had the ability to influence a game in the final third. He was quick, he was clever and I thought: this kid is going somewhere, he's far too good for this level.

Obviously he did very well at Wolves and continued to consistently score goals when they were promoted to the Premier League. Now he's got the chance to show how good he is at a top side like Liverpool.

His arrival at Anfield is similar to that of Sadio Mane and Mo Salah. Both were already fantastic footballers but they needed the platform to truly show how good they are. Liverpool, as a football club, provided that platform and now Jota has got the same opportunity.

In Jürgen Klopp he also has a manager who believes and trusts in him, and has a track record of improving and getting the best out of players. Playing in one of the best teams around also helps.

It was hard to see how anybody could possibly dislodge any of Liverpool's front-three so there was an assumption that Jota had been signed as back-up, to give them occasional breathers. However, the fact that all four have started a few games shows that Jota has the flexibility, ability and understanding to fit into this Liverpool team.

He also has the mentality to be a Liverpool player and that is the biggest thing Jürgen has brought to this group of players. They all understand the club's identity and what it means to represent Liverpool.

Of course, scoring goals as a forward is also important so getting off the mark against Arsenal on his Anfield debut, just moments after coming on, will have given Jota confidence. It enabled him to settle in more quickly, but it was a shame that Liverpool supporters were not inside Anfield to enjoy that moment with him. Thankfully that situation is now improving.

Scoring a Champions League hat-trick away to Atalanta was also a special night for him and the way he dinked the ball over the keeper for the first goal showed Jota is a forward who can remain calm and composed in key moments. Liverpool need players who can be ruthless and clinical in big games. Jota can be a huge asset when those big games come along.

Another important factor is that Jota now provides Mane, Salah and Roberto Firmino with healthy competition. Some players arrive at a club and cause unrest in the dressing-room, but Jota seems to be the kind of character who is happy to play the part asked of him.

He has the right mentality. He hasn't walked into the dressing-room and told anybody, "I'm going to take your place." He's bought into the team-focused culture Jürgen has created and that makes him the type of talented player you want at the club.

Having only recently turned 24, he is also a player who could have many good years ahead of him at Liverpool. You never know how a player will kick on and develop, but under Jürgen's management both Salah and Mane have become world-class players.

Jota has the potential to be in that bracket. He's a Portuguese international and he's at Liverpool Football Club, so I hope in five years time we're still talking about him being influential and scoring goals but also having world-class status.

With the right attitude and the right players around him, the opportunity is there for Diogo Jota to build on his fantastic start as a Liverpool player.

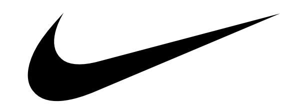


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